For all six hormones endocrine, developmental, immunological, neurobiological, immunotoxic, genotoxic and carcinogenic effects could be envisaged. Of the various susceptible risk groups, prepubertal children are the group of greatest concern. Again the available data do not enable a quantitative estimate of the risk.

In view of the intrinsic properties of the hormones and in consideration of epidemiological findings, no threshold levels can be defined for any of the six substances.

3. In 1999, 4 100 tons of fresh, chilled or frozen beef and offal were imported into the Community from the US. According to Commission Decision 1999/302/EC, of 30 April 1999, 100 % of the consignments of US meat shall be submitted for analysis: ‘two official samples shall be taken from each consignment concerned and examined for residues of each of the xenobiotic hormones …’.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1407/00
by Jeffrey Titford (EDD) to the Commission
(5 May 2000)
Subject: Fraud and corruption within the European Union

Will the Commission please indicate what actions have been taken to prevent a recurrence of fraud and corruption like that revealed in the Leonardo Programme, supervised by former Commissioner Edith Cresson?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission
(13 July 2000)

The Anti-Fraud Office of the European Communities (OLAF) undertook an investigation into the internal management of the Technical Assistance Bureau (BAT) responsible for the implementation of the Leonardo programme and, as a consequence, identified facts about the case which could result in criminal charges relating to possible fraud. Those facts were then transmitted to the relevant judicial authorities. The OLAF investigation did not detect evidence of wrongdoing in the management of the programme as such.

In addition to the OLAF investigation, an administrative enquiry into the management of the programme was undertaken and has recently been concluded. Like the OLAF investigation, the report of that enquiry did not show evidence of serious error in the management of the programme warranting the opening of disciplinary proceedings.

As part of the efforts to further reinforce security against attempted fraud, corruption or serious mismanagement, the Commission’s Reform programme contains several provisions for action which inter alia respond to the concerns registered, and the recommendations made, in the first report of the Committee of Independent Experts.

Those provisions include the strengthening of responsibility and accountability of Directorates General which will be directly responsible for financial management, and will include an account of that management in their Annual Report; the implementation of new audit capabilities in Directorates General; and the establishment of an independent internal Audit Service led, and mainly staffed by, qualified specialists in financial audit. In addition, the Commission’s resources dedicated to audit will be increased by the external recruitment of specialists and through internal training.

To illustrate the effect of the changes it can be reasonably anticipated that audit units of Directorates General will undertake, or have undertaken, auditing of TAOs (or comparable organisations). Moreover, if and when an audit report has not been issued within a satisfactory period of time — the internal Audit Service will be alerted and will make the appropriate investigations on which it will report to the Commission.
As the Honourable Member will have noted in the White Paper on Reform, published and presented to Parliament on 1 March, some Reform provisions relating to modernisation of financial management and control will require changes in the existing Financial Regulations legislation before they can enter into force. Meanwhile, the Commission is implementing and will implement all changes that do not require legislative amendment. Resulting from that, the new Internal Audit Service became operational on 21 June, the Commission will decide on the provisions for the decentralisation of ex-ante visa controls on 12 July, all DGs are undertaking an extensive assessment of their financial systems to be completed by September 2000, and all staff engaged in financial matters will be receiving extensive training from September.

(2001/C 103 E/010)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1410/00

by Alexander de Roo (Verts/ALE) to the Commission

(3 May 2000)

Subject: Consumption of milk from sick cows continues

On 6 April 2000 Commissioner Byrne observed, in answer to my Question P-0768/00 (1) on behalf of the Commission, that 'the information so far available suggests that there is no particular risk for public health'. The Commission evidently has some doubts as to the reliability of the information from the Netherlands Government.

One in three cows in the Netherlands, more than 1,1 million cattle, have been inoculated with a contaminated vaccine. The vaccination campaign to check bovine influenza was stopped in February 1999. Around 7000 farmers whose cows were inoculated with a vaccine of this kind by Bayer are complaining that tens of thousands of their cows are having trouble with udder infections, nasal bleeding, miscarriages, loss of milk production and calves suffering from bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) immediately after birth.

One farmer, B. Roozengaarde of Zelhem, properly reported his problems with sick cows. His farm was closed down by the Netherlands Government in late November 1999. To this day he has received no compensation, despite the fact that it is mandatory under Netherlands law in cases of contagious disease. The many other farmers who have not reported their problems with their sick cows are receiving quite different treatment. Veterinarians from the Veterinary Health Service (VHS) are working under a protocol approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, which states that farms with more than a given percentage of sick cows may not go on supplying milk. If a farmer has more than this percentage of sick cows, the VHS advises them to have the sickest cows slaughtered, so as to come beneath the percentage prescribed. The farm is then approved and milk supplies, even from the remaining sick cows, can continue. The Algemeen Dagblad carries this story in its issue of 14 April 2000. This practice is in flagrant violation of European law.

Three farms have meanwhile been closed in the Netherlands. Hundreds, if not thousands, of farmers are supplying milk from sick cows to consumers with the cooperation of the Netherlands Government. Consumer confidence in the safety of our food has been damaged repeatedly over the last few years. This business with listless or staggering cows must be cleared up as soon as possible, and appropriate steps taken to put an end to the affair.

1. Does the Commission agree that double standards are being used in the Netherlands?

2. Does it agree that the Commission cannot go on relying on the information from the Netherlands Government any longer, but must itself launch an independent investigation and put an end to these unacceptable practices?