Joint answer
to Written Questions P-2463/00 and E-2481/00
given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission
(26 September 2000)

The Commission considers that carrying out operations such as castration whilst the animals are being transported is a breach of the requirement in Article 5A1(b) of Directive 91/628/EEC of 19 November 1991 (1) as amended by Council Directive 95/29/EC of 29 June 1995, on the protection of animals during transport (2). All animals require some time to recover from the trauma of such operations and it could be assumed that they are not fit for immediate onward travel.

Commission Regulation (EC) 615/98 of 18 March 1998 (3) provides specific detailed rules of application for the export refund arrangements as regards the welfare of live bovine animals during transport to third countries. Under this Regulation every consignment of bovine animals sent to third countries is required to comply, during transport to the first place of unloading in the third country of final destination, with Community legislation in the field of the protection of animals during transport. In particular the Regulation provides for the checking of the animals after their arrival in the third country of final destination. If the result of these inspections (which must be carried out by a vet) is not satisfactory as far as animal welfare is concerned the payment of the export refund is refused or if already granted is recoverable.

The Commission has already received allegations that some male cattle and sheep shipped from some Member States to Egypt were castrated on vessels. However at this moment the Commission does not have evidence or even information that could support such allegations. The Commission has undertaken steps including consultation of the Member States involved with the aim to clarify the situation. It will take measures if necessary.

In 1999 21 593 male bovines for slaughter were exported from the Community to Egypt. 14 716 animals originated from Germany and 6 877 were exported from Italy. Export of live sheep rarely occurred (14 animals from the Netherlands).


(2001/C 103 E/184)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2464/00
by Charles Tannock (PPE-DE) to the Council
(24 July 2000)

Subject: WHO sanctions (bananas)

When will the Council vote on the proposed European Union banana trade arrangements?

Reply
(7 November 2000)

1. At its meeting on 10 and 11 July 2000 the Council noted a report by the Commission on the talks it had held to resolve the banana dispute. It asked the Commission to examine the possibility of managing the market using a 'first come, first served' quota system and to report back after investigating the possible solutions, including the tariff solution and its implications. The Council will take a decision when it has seen that report.
2. It may be noted in any case that the Commission's proposal for amending Regulation (EEC) No 404/93 on the common organisation of the market in bananas is based on Article 37 of the Treaty, which means the Council cannot take a decision until the European Parliament has delivered its Opinion.

3. The Council reiterates its concern that the banana dispute should be settled as soon as possible in accordance with WTO rules and having regard for the interests of Community producers and the Union's commitments towards the ACP States, especially the weakest among them.

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WRITTEN QUESTION P-2472/00
by Juan Izquierdo Collado (PSE) to the Commission

Subject: Madrid-Levante highspeed train link

Is the Commission aware of the proposed route (‘A modificado’ – A modified) by the Spanish Minister of Works, Mr Álvarez Cascos, for the announced Madrid-Levante highspeed rail link?

Is the Commission aware of the sheer environmental impact of the proposed route, which cuts through specially protected bird sanctuaries and areas of nature of ecological significance?

Does the Commission agree with the European Parliament’s position as stated in its resolution on the Annual Report on the 1998 Cohesion Funds (A5-0140/2000) adopted in June 2000, in which it ‘urges the Commission to ensure that, if various alternatives exist for one and the same project, preference is given to those which have least impact on the environment’?

Under these conditions, could a project which ignores Parliament’s recommendations obtain Community funding?

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

At this stage the Commission does not have any detailed information on the various alternative solutions proposed by the Spanish authorities for the route of the future high-speed train link between Madrid and Levante, which is the sole responsibility of the Member State. In any event, the route will have to undergo an environmental impact assessment in accordance with Community legislation.

If this project is submitted for Cohesion Fund part-financing, the Commission will carefully examine the documentation submitted with the aid application to ensure that it complies fully with Community environmental legislation.

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WRITTEN QUESTION P-2476/00
by Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE) to the Commission

Subject: Finnish and Swedish derogations – excise rates on alcohol

The Commission’s report on the Nordic derogations concludes with the words – ‘the Commission would urge each of the Member States concerned to take the necessary steps in order to prepare for a smooth transition to the application of the general rules in force, at the latest by the date of expiry of their derogation …’. The ‘necessary steps’ are obviously the reduction of the high excise rates, although,