Pricing and reimbursement negotiations are the responsibility of the Member States concerned. The procedures adopted for these negotiations need to respect the terms of the 'Transparency Directive', Council Directive 89/105/EEC of 21 December 1988 relating to the transparency of measures regulating the prices of medicinal products for human use and their inclusion in the scope of national health insurance systems (2) and to bear in mind the single market dimension of the European pharmaceutical market.


WRITTEN QUESTION E-3076/00
by Raffaele Costa (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(2 October 2000)

Subject: Community aid for dairy cattle farmers

Knowing that:

— under EC Regulation 1257/1999 (1), the European Union grants financial contributions of up to ITL 190,000 per hectare of grazing land to farmers breeding their own cattle who put them out to pasture for at least 180 days a year rather than keeping them in the cowshed;

— some breeds (such as Piedmontese cattle) are progressively being replaced by others (such as Friesian and Simmental cattle) with a high milk yield;

— these cattle are ill-suited to grazing in the heat of the day, particularly throughout the long, hot, summer days of southern European countries;

— the rules are, on the other hand, appropriate for northern European countries (such as France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany) where the climate and environmental factors make it possible for cattle to graze in the open;

— certain proposals put forward to remedy this disparity would require a change in the Community rules to enable farmers in all the Member States to qualify for this aid, even if the grass used to feed the animals was cut and brought into the cowshed;

— to improve the quality of milk and derived products it is necessary to improve the diet of dairy cattle by increasing their intake of grass and hay;

— insisting that cattle must spend at least 180 days per year outdoors rather than in the cowshed is an arbitrary requirement which might actually have the effect of encouraging fraud.

Does the Commission intend to consider the above-mentioned proposals, and what action does it intend to take to enable all European cattle farmers to qualify on an equal footing for the financial aid available under the above-mentioned regulation, which aid is supposed to ensure both that grazing land is preserved and that the quality of dairy products and their derivatives is improved?


Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission
(6 November 2000)

The Commission would point out that Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations (2) contains no provisions for aid to support milk production or dairy farmers.
However, the agri-environmental measures in Articles 22 to 24 of that Regulation do provide for support to be granted to farmers who give agri-environmental commitments for at least five years concerning methods of agricultural production which protect the environment and preserve the landscape. The aid paid to the farmer in return for the agri-environmental service rendered is based on the income foregone and the additional costs arising from the commitments.

Agri-environmental support is intended primarily to encourage the management of low-intensity pasture land. To do this, some of the rural development programmes drawn up by the Member States and approved by the Commission include agri-environmental premiums for the upkeep of alpine pasture. This traditional method of stock breeding entails keeping the animals (cattle, sheep or horses) on mountain pasture for a period which varies considerably (from 80 to 180 days) depending on the area where the measure is being applied and local conditions. This highly extensive practice is considered by all concerned as essential to maintain the environmental balance of mountain areas, which are very fragile ecosystems from an environmental point of view. The maintenance of alpine pasture imposes additional costs on farmers and so this technique attracts a premium, which again varies considerably depending on the area where the measure is being applied and local conditions.

It should be noted that this support is in no way either production aid or direct aid to the beef/veal sector such as that provided under the market organisation in question.

The Commission does not therefore consider that there is any need to amend the existing rules to take account of the points raised in the Honourable Member's question.