According to information available to the Commission, oranges, either raw or in any kind of processed form, are not irradiated neither in Brazil nor in any other country. Orange juice and orange concentrates need to be shipped for export at −5 °C in order to avoid that they turn sour. Irradiation would only be an advantage if cold storage could be avoided.

The Commission would welcome any relevant information on the irradiation of oranges in third countries, if available.

In accordance with Article 7(3) of Directive 1999/2/EC, the Commission has given a mandate to the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) to standardise detection methods for irradiated foods. So far, CEN has standardised eight methods. Information on the methods is available on the following web site of DG Health and Consumer Protection of the Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sfp/sfp_index_en.html.

Some of the methods standardised by CEN may be applicable, e.g. EN 13784 and possibly EN 1788 for oranges, EN 1787 for orange juice and EN 13783 for all orange products. However, at this stage, scientific proof of their reliability is not available.

(2002/C 277 E/217) WRITTEN QUESTION E-1381/02
by Paul Lannoye (Verts/ALE) to the Commission
(14 May 2002)

Subject: Authorisations for treatment with ionising radiation of foodstuffs and food ingredients granted by Belgium

In accordance with Article 4(6) of Directive 1999/2/EC(1) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 February 1999 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States concerning foods and food ingredients treated with ionising radiation, the 'List of Member States' authorisations of food and food ingredients which may be treated with ionising radiation' was published in OJ C 43 of 16 February 2002, p. 18.

In the case of Belgium this list does not correspond to the authorisations for treatment with ionising radiation provided for by the ministerial decree of 16 July 1980 (and subsequent amendments thereto), which, in addition to the authorisations referred to in OJ C 43/18, allow treatment with ionising radiation of:

- strawberries;
- gum arabic;
- certain dehydrated and dried vegetables;
- cooked, peeled and deep-frozen prawns;
- mechanically boned chicken meat and;
- egg white.

How does the Commission explain these discrepancies? What steps does the Commission intend to take to guarantee the reliability of information provided by the Member States regarding authorisations concerning treatment with ionising radiation of foodstuffs and food ingredients?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission  
(21 June 2002)

According to Article 4(4) and (5) of Directive 1999/2/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 22 February 1999 on the approximation of the laws of Member States concerning foods and food ingredients treated with ionising radiation, until the entry into force of the completed positive list of foods authorised in the Community for treatment by ionising radiation:

- the Member States can maintain existing authorisations provided that they are in accordance with the opinions and recommendations of the Scientific Committee on Food and with the provisions of the Directive 1999/2/EC;
- any Member State may authorise the treatment of foods by ionising radiation for which authorisation has been maintained by another Member State.

The Commission has published the list of authorisations in the Member States in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

Belgium has only recently transposed the Directive 1999/2/EC into national legislation. The Commission has identified a number of inconsistencies between the list authorised by Belgian legislation and the list published by the Commission, namely for strawberries, gum arabic, dehydrated vegetables and tea. The Belgian authorisations for these products are not in compliance with Article 4(4) and therefore the Commission has requested clarification from the Belgian authorities.

The authorisation for shrimps is in compliance with Article 4(4) and this product is on the list published by the Commission.

In accordance with Article 4(5) of Directive 1999/2/EC, Belgium recently authorised the treatment of mechanically recovered chicken meat and egg white. This is in accordance with the legislation as at least one Member State has maintained authorisation for each product. The Commission will publish an updated list of authorisations in the Member States in the near future.

Information about food irradiation, including the list of authorisations in the Member States, is available on the following website of the Directorate General (DG) ‘Health and Consumer Protection’ of the Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sfp/sfp_index_en.html.

(2) OJ C 43, 16.2.2002.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1388/02  
by Hiltrud Breyer (Verts/ALE) to the Commission  
(15 May 2002)

Subject: Slaughtering of animals in accordance with Jewish rites without prior stunning

In 1999 the Austrian Constitutional Court handed down a judgment stating that the slaughtering of animals in accordance with religious rites cannot be prohibited on the grounds that this would violate the fundamental right to religious freedom.

However, the slaughtering of animals without prior stunning contravenes national law, in particular the provisions of the animal protection laws in the individual federal Länder, which stipulate that animals must be stunned prior to being slaughtered. Animals slaughtered in accordance with Jewish rites have their throats cut without first being stunned and slowly bleed to death.

Commission Decision 2000/418/EC (1) banned the use of pithing rods which destroy an animal’s central nervous system, stunning it and making slaughter painless.