The situation in Spain described by the Honourable Member reflects the limited authority the Commission has in relation to the approval of breeding organisations or breeders associations and moreover in relation to stud books maintained by official services.

A procedure for settling disputes between organisations or associations or, in a second step, between the competent authorities of different Member States is provided for in Commission Decision 92/354/EEC of 11 June 1992 laying down certain rules to ensure coordination between organizations and associations which maintain or establish stud-books for registered equidae (1); if necessary the Commission may lay down rules to ensure co-ordination between organisations or associations in accordance with Article 4(e) of Directive 90/427/EEC.


WRITTEN QUESTION P-1841/02
by Georges Garot (PSE) to the Commission

Subject: Shallot production

The French fruit and vegetable intertrade association and shallot producers in western France are concerned at plans put forward by the Commission's Directorates-General for Agriculture and for Health and Consumer Protection which call for the standardisation of shallot and onion production on the basis of those products' trade descriptions.

This approach is worrying on a number of counts:

- it is incompatible with the European Union's stated intention to promote the European agriculture model and it seriously detracts from the multifunctionality of agriculture, in particular the aspects thereof which are concerned with the environment (biodiversity) and with product safety and quality;
- it goes against the decisions taken at the Berlin Summit, with particular reference to rural development. The purpose of this second pillar is to maintain activity in rural areas; the main European shallot production method goes a long way towards meeting that objective, despite receiving no support;
- it runs counter to the sustainable-development strategy drawn up at the 2001 Göteborg European Council;
- lastly, it is at odds with the substance of the 2000 White Paper on food safety and, in particular, with the major principles of increased product quality and safety and better provision of information to consumers.

How can the Commission account for its failure to take the major principles and rules of conduct which it has adopted into account in its study, analysis and handling of the problems relating to shallots?

What interests and what policy is it really aiming to promote? Should the European texts relating to shallots not be reconsidered?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission

(2 August 2002)

The Commission is not currently drafting any texts aimed at standardising shallot and onion production or their trade descriptions.

However, it has emerged from a complaint submitted to the Commission that French shallot producers, particularly in Brittany, are very concerned by the fact that shallot seeds have been placed on the market.
According to the complainants, the seeds in question do not meet Community standards and should not, under Community law, be placed on the market.

In addition, a complaint has been lodged with the Commission regarding the fact that French legislation allows shallots to be placed on the market only if they are grown from bulbs using vegetative propagation.

The Commission is currently examining these complaints in detail and will ensure that the points put forward by the Honourable Member in his written question are taken into account in the course of this examination.

(2002/C301E/253)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1852/02
by Pedro Marset Campos (GUE/NGL) to the Commission
(28 June 2002)

Subject: Pollution of the Segura river (Murcia, Spain)

The pollution of the river Segura (Murcia, Spain) is a problem of serious proportions, which is only slowly and gradually being dealt with by the authorities concerned in the autonomous regions of Murcia and Valencia.

A report drawn up in 2001 by the Spanish Ombudsman, to be submitted to the Congress of Deputies on 17 June 2002, draws attention to the deterioration and pollution of the Segura and takes the view that the action taken on the matter by the regional and national authorities (the Segura Hydrographic Confederation) has not been effective.

In addition, a lawsuit is currently before the courts in Murcia and Orihuela, relating to charges of ongoing environmental crime. The charges in question relate to the dumping of waste into the Segura, and identify, as the worst polluters, the municipalities of the Murcia region through whose territory the Segura flows.

Among the nine defendants are the chief administrator of the Segura Hydrographic Confederation and the Commissioner for Water. It is stated in the charge against them that they have failed to fulfil their legal obligation to preserve the quality of the Segura river and of the water used for irrigation; this water, according to the depositions of numerous experts involved in the case, is causing damage to the environment and to human health.

1. Is the Commission aware of these circumstances?

2. What action does it intend to take to investigate the above charges?

3. Does the Commission not believe that the regional and national authorities concerned must be asked, as a matter of urgency, to propose immediate and comprehensive measures with a view to ensuring respect for the EU legislation concerning the right of all citizens to a healthy environment?

Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission
(31 July 2002)

1. The Commission is not aware of the facts referred to by the Honourable Member concerning the judicial action currently before the Spanish courts relating to the pollution of the river Segura.

2. The Commission does not have any power as regards penal law and therefore cannot act to shed light on the alleged environmental offences to which the Honourable Member refers. The Community is therefore not responsible for this matter, but it can be dealt with through the national courts. It is clear from the Written Question that the Spanish judicial authorities are aware of the facts of this case.