In developing countries delegations are equipped with a number of vehicles, including a cross-country vehicle, equal to the number of officials. In industrialised countries, apart from the diplomatic car for the Head of Delegation (and one for the Deputy Head (1) where relevant), there are usually one or two official cars, depending on the number of officials, and possibly a minibus. The criteria for selecting the type of car are based on an analysis of the specific requirements of each delegation and its location. In practice, the maximum engine capacity of vehicles must be less than 2 litres (2 1/2 litres for cross-country vehicles) and the maximum cost less than ECU 22 000.

When vehicles are replaced, the three parameters taken into consideration are: age (5 to 7 years after purchase); number of kilometres (100 000 to 150 000 km depending on their state), and the scale of maintenance costs. Internal rules listing the conditions of use, maintenance procedures, criteria and parameters for purchase and replacement were issued on 29 April 1996.

4. Offices in the capitals of the Member States have two vehicles: one diplomatic car and one general official vehicle (carriage of goods and persons). Regional offices have one vehicle for both purposes. The use of an official car is confined strictly to official visits to national authorities. All staff required to represent the Commission use the official car.

The criteria for selecting the type of car are based on an analysis of the specific requirements of each office and its location. In practice, the maximum engine capacity must be less that 2 litres and the maximum cost less than ECU 22 000. When cars are replaced, the parameters taken into consideration are age (5 to 7 years after purchase) and the number of kilometres (100 000 to 150 000 km, depending on their state). Internal rules listing the conditions of use, maintenance procedures, the criteria and parameters for purchase and replacement are being studied.

(1) Official title (At present, Geneva, Moscow, Tokyo, Washington).

(98/C 158/57)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3158/97

by Jan Mulder (ELDR) to the Commission

(13 October 1997)

Subject: Introduction of a zero refund for the export of cheese to effective export markets

The current problems with the system of awarding export certificates for cheese are increasingly having negative consequences for the export opportunities of the European dairy sector, particularly since milk prices are already on the decline. One possible way of overcoming these problems would be to reduce or even set at zero the export refunds on cheese for certain destinations with a high level of purchasing power. The Commission clearly endorses this view, since it has reduced some export refunds in the past.

Why, in spite of the fact it has been urged to do so from many sides, has the Commission not (yet) taken the decision to reduce to zero the export refunds on cheese for the United States?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(17 November 1997)

The principal destination for exports of Community cheese, both in volume and in value, is indeed the United States. However, as the US market is considerably more important to some Member States than to others, views on the desirability of a zero refund for cheese exported to the United States are far from unanimous. This explains the caution, which the Honourable Member apparently regrets, of the Community's approach: traders on both sides of the Atlantic must be able to plan their future activities in the context of increasingly less advantageous refunds.

Moreover, the Commission is responsible for ensuring that the quotas available following successive multilateral negotiations (the Uruguay and Tokyo Rounds) are used to best advantage; this means avoiding any measure that might lead the US authorities to offer the Community quotas to other countries in the framework of their 'globalisation' system.