

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission*(13 November 1997)*

The Commission intends to publish its detailed proposals on rural development in the context of the overall Agenda 2000 ⁽¹⁾ package in the first three months of 1998.

⁽¹⁾ Doc. COM(97) 2000 final.

(98/C 134/213)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3396/97**by Fernando Fernández Martín (PPE) to the Commission***(23 October 1997)*

Subject: Effect of the Sumatra and Borneo forest fires on climate change

The eruption of the volcano Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in 1991 not only affected the regional atmosphere, but also caused world-wide temperatures to cool slightly. The same region (Sumatra and Borneo) is now beset by sweeping forest fires.

Has the Commission taken any steps to gauge the impact of these fires on climate change, bearing in mind that their adverse effects must be added to those of the above-mentioned eruption?

Answer given by Mr Marin on behalf of the Commission*(19 November 1997)*

The Commission and Member States in Jakarta have set up a joint European Union fire response group (EUFREG) in response to the emergency situation created by the large-scale forest fires in Indonesia affecting an estimated 1 million hectares.

EUFREG will now enter into its second phase, assessing the area, type, classification and use of land burned in this year's fires, mainly through the analysis of remote sensing data. It will also prepare terms of reference for a review mission on this year's forest fires with the objective of assisting the government of Indonesia to implement improved policies and practices to avoid, or at least minimize, any repetition of this year's disaster.

The Commission will continue to co-ordinate with the Indonesian government and is willing to assist in a major study on the medium and long-term impact of the forest fires on the regional and global environment and climate.

The Indonesian government already organized an international conference on science and technology for the assessment of global environment change and its impact on Indonesian maritime continent in Jakarta from 10-12 November 1997, with active Commission participation.

(98/C 134/214)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3414/97**by Hiltrud Breyer (V) to the Commission***(28 October 1997)*

Subject: World trade and protection of animals

The European Commission has often indicated that a WTO arbitration decision would not produce any clarification in favour of European animal protection provisions. The decision on hormones appears to confirm this assessment.

1. What is the next stage if this decision is maintained? What can be done to prevent the EU's animal protection provisions being eliminated one after the other?
2. Is there a greater possibility of success in other cases, or must action now focus on new negotiations, reinterpretation or even changes to WTO provisions?