

(98/C 354/109)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1124/98**by Marjo Matikainen-Kallström (PPE) to the Commission***(8 April 1998)*

Subject: The illogicality of the Community's school milk subsidy programme

The reply given by Commissioner Franz Fischler (E-0124/98FI) to my written question completely missed the key point of my argument. As the reply stresses that the level of subsidy depends on the milk content of products and that less support is provided for semi-skimmed milk than for whole milk, the only possible conclusion is that the programme favours — and encourages consumers to give preference to — high-fat milk products at the expense of low-fat products.

The reply also stresses that the support is intended to reduce the retail price differential between high-fat and low-fat milk products, so that one can only deduce that the Commission does not wish to take account in its subsidy policy of the unhealthy effects of consuming too much fat.

How will the Commission in future correct the principles underlying the school milk subsidy programme so as to cease basing the programme on the precept 'the more fat, the more deserving of support', which makes no sense from the point of view of public health?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission*(18 May 1998)*

The Commission does not share the Honourable Member's conclusion that the differing amounts of aid granted in respect of products covered by the school-milk distribution programme encourage the consumer to favour high-fat milk products. On the contrary, it takes the view that the amounts of aid are already set on the basis of objective criteria which should not influence the consumer's choice of product. Moreover, only the individual consumer is in a position to judge whether — in the light of his/her specific circumstances — a product contains too much fat or not.

In view of the above, the Commission does not at present envisage proposing changes to the criteria for granting this aid.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-1129/98**by Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE) to the Commission***(8 April 1998)*

Subject: Greek customs authorities impeding transit of goods in Greek ports

According to my information, the Greek customs authorities are unlawfully refusing to allow shipping companies operating regular services between Community ports to effect customs clearance on goods being loaded or unloaded in the Greek ports of Piraeus, Thessaloniki and Heraklion under the simplified procedure for Community transit pursuant to Article 448 of the European Union Customs Code (Regulation EC 2454/93) ⁽¹⁾. On the pretext that the docks in the three ports are 100% 'free zones', the customs authorities are compelling shippers and consignees of goods passing through the above three ports to comply with the 15 customs procedures applying in Greece to so-called 'free zones', which entails greater costs and loss of time.

Is the Commission aware of this situation and, if so, what measures will it take to put an end to this absurd practice which is obviously serving sectional interests?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 253, 11.10.1993, p. 1.