

The said aid will result from the withdrawal of 1,2 million pigs from the market and, combined with other ad hoc measures, will bring some relief to a sector whose plight has reached the extreme.

However, the Commission has yet to indicate how this withdrawal of meat from the market is to be shared out amongst the producer countries.

What criteria does the Commission intend to adopt to share out the aforementioned 100 000 tonnes of pigmeat amongst the producer countries? Will it take into account the production levels in each Member State?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(13 January 1999)

The detailed rules for the food supply programme for Russia are at the moment under preparation and will be published in the Official journal as Commission regulations in the near future.

The Commission will obtain the agreed quantity of pigmeat from the markets through a tender system, which will give the operators in Member States the possibility to make offers in the context of the food supply programme.

(1999/C 207/176)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3792/98

by Niels Kofoed (ELDR) to the Commission

(11 December 1998)

Subject: Robots used for milking and Directive 89/362, Chapter III(4)

Pursuant to Chapter III(4) of Directive 89/362 ⁽¹⁾ on hygiene, before the milking of the individual cow the milker must inspect the appearance of the milk. It is not possible to comply with this requirement, however, if robots are used for milking. Nevertheless, more than 400 robots are used for milking in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and the UK.

What does the Commission intend to do to ensure that the rules are applied uniformly throughout the Union? Will the Commission amend the directive to allow the use of robots under certain conditions? Is the Commission considering measures to enforce the current rules?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 156, 8.6.1989, p. 30.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(21 January 1999)

The Commission has been informed of the existence of the milking robots to which the Honourable Member refers. They allow each animal to be milked when it wishes; while the milk cannot be visually inspected by a human operator as a result, it does represent progress both in terms of animal welfare and the farmer's improved quality of life. Physical or chemical sensors should make it possible to assess the quality of the milk as accurately as a visual examination alone.

The Commission intends to evaluate the objectivity of these advances and their compatibility with the highest levels of food safety, which must of course remain paramount. As part of a more general project to simplify the veterinary health directives, the Commission will make inspection visits to Community milk establishments and, based on the resulting reports, will amend the rules if necessary.