

(1999/C 370/093)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0596/99**by Ian White (PSE) to the Commission**

(12 March 1999)

Subject: Growth hormone rBST

1. Will the Commission insist that the relevant committees study all evidence concerning the impact on both animal and human health of the growth hormone rBST when the company that owns this drug applies for a licence to sell it for use within the EU?
2. Will the Commission follow the precautionary principle when the issue of granting the licence to sell the bovine growth hormone rBST is brought up?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(4 May 1999)

The Commission asked for an opinion from the specific veterinary committee on animal health and animal welfare, as well as from the scientific committee on public health, regarding the use of BST. Each of the two scientific committees has recently issued a scientific opinion relating to their specific tasks. The opinions are available on the Commission's Europa server. Based on these conclusions of the scientific opinions, the Commission, with a view to a decision being taken on this matter, will submit a report and a proposal on the future of the moratorium on bovine somatotrophin (Council Decision 94/936/EC) ⁽¹⁾ to the Council and the Parliament.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 366, 31.12.1994.

(1999/C 370/094)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0599/99**by Frédéric Striby (I-EDN) to the Commission**

(3 March 1999)

Subject: Registration and taxation of Alsatian recreational craft

As far as the registration of vessels in France is concerned, recreational craft in international waters are subject to a flag tax; while in inland waterways, as in Alsace, they are subject to the VNF (French inland waterway traffic) tax. Given that the canal connecting the Rhone and the Rhine which also provides a link between northern and southern Alsace can no longer be used, Alsatian recreational craft are now compelled to use the Canal d'Alsace. The latter is governed by an international charter and, despite the fact that Alsatian recreational craft sailing to Strasbourg, Colmar or Mulhouse are merely passing through, they are obliged to pay the flag tax to the customs authorities, and are thus subject to double taxation, while vessels flying foreign flags are exempt.

Is the Commission aware of this double taxation? What representations does it intend to make to the French State in this matter?

Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission

(27 April 1999)

The Commission is not aware of the situation described by the Honourable Member. It would point out, however, that since registration or circulation taxes on certain means of transport (including pleasure crafts) are not yet harmonised in the Community, Member States are free to introduce or maintain such taxes provided they do not give rise to any infringement of Community law and in particular of Article 95 of the EC Treaty. This latter article forbids Member States to introduce or maintain tax systems where the taxation on imported products and that on similar domestic products is calculated in a different manner on the basis of different criteria which leads to higher taxation being imposed on the imported products. On the basis of the information provided, the system of dual taxation which is levied on certain vessels appears only to affect domestic means of transport and does not, therefore, infringe Community law.