

In the case of the tariff quota for tuna loins, the Commission noted that the Community did not produce enough tuna loins to meet its needs. Indeed, the Community canning industry has to make increasing use of imports from third countries. This observation was confirmed by figures provided on 15 January 1999 by the Spanish producer group 'Asociación Nacional de Fabricantes de Conservas de Pescado y Marisco' (Anfaco). Their statistics show that Spain, the main Member State producing tuna loins, is itself unable to supply its canning industry fully.

The Commission would also point out that, when imports from countries enjoying preferential treatment (the ACP and 'GSP-Drugs' States) take place in accordance with the rules of origin — to which the Honourable Member rightly attaches great importance — they are still insufficient to supply the Community canning industry.

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(1999/C 370/118)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0686/99**

**by Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna (PPE) to the Commission**

(26 March 1999)

*Subject:* 1999 tariff quotas for tuna loins

The current structure and mechanisms for the supply of tuna loins to EU countries reflect the legitimate interests of the Community fleet in a balance that has been achieved with great difficulty.

Will the Commission therefore explain why it has requested the opening of a new tariff quota which is completely at odds with the interests of the Community fleet, in that its natural market will be drastically reduced?

**Answer given by Mrs Bonino on behalf of the Commission**

(7 May 1999)

The Commission does not consider that the opening of a quota, for a short period of time and a limited quantity, and subject moreover to tariff duty of 6 %, is likely to undermine the interests of Community shipowners or reduce their Community market share as regards supplies of tuna.

Indeed, the Community fleet disposes of a substantial part of its production in non-member countries in the light of requirements on the world market. It is significant in this respect that the fleet reduced its deliveries to the Community market by 15 % in 1998 as compared with 1996, and by 36 % in the case of yellowfin tuna, which is the species most sought after for high-quality canning.

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(1999/C 370/119)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-0688/99**

**by Fernand Herman (PPE) to the Commission**

(26 March 1999)

*Subject:* Situation of the starch industry and its industrial clients in the European Union

In my oral question O-0025/96 <sup>(1)</sup> I drew the Commission's attention to the fact that the European starch industry was no longer capable of supplying its customers (the paper, fermentation and biotechnology industries, etc.) satisfactorily, inter alia because of the low level of refunds.

Commissioner Fischler replied, in plenary session in Strasbourg on 15 February 1996, that the Commission would do all it could to guarantee our industry a satisfactory competitive position vis-à-vis its competitors in third countries.

Today I note that during more than half of the three-year period that has elapsed since February 1996 production refunds have been insufficient.