

Reply

(26 June 2002)

Article 33 TEU excludes that the Council intervenes in internal measures aimed at maintaining public order or protecting internal security. It is thus not for the Council to take any position in respect to the issue raised by the Honourable Member of the European Parliament.

(2002/C 229 E/097)

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0440/02

by Neil Parish (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(12 February 2002)

Subject: Missing CAP funds in France

There have been reports that an official French audit of the common agricultural policy by the French Audit Office revealed a 'secret, uncontrolled system of agricultural subsidies that is open to abuse and is rarely penalised even when detected', with much of the money going to activities other than agriculture. Moreover, it has been reported that one-third of all subsidies are inflated or wrong as a result of mistakes or fraud and that only one-fifth of these sums are ever recovered.

Could the Commission please verify the validity of this audit? How can it justify this atrocious behaviour towards European taxpayers, and how does it plan to rectify this gross injustice? How can such a large amount of money be so fraudulently used by the largest recipient of CAP funds?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(20 March 2002)

The Commission is also aware of the audit report of the French Court of auditors (Audit Office) on the management of agricultural subsidies in France to which the Honourable Member makes reference. The audit report in question does raise criticism of the French administration in a number of areas. The Commission is in the process of examining the report in more detail. However, no confirmation of the points raised by the Honourable Member has been found.

The Commission wishes to bring to the Honourable Member's attention that the service of the Commission charged with the audit of agricultural expenditure (formerly the clearance of accounts) has carried out a substantial number of missions in France over the years. In addition, an independent French body, the CCCOP, carries out a detailed annual examination of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) Guarantee expenditure in France, including the re-examination of several hundred individual claims per year.

These controls have, over the years, identified a number of different problems in the control system operated in France for EAGGF Guarantee and these have led to financial corrections imposed on France in the clearance of accounts process, totalling around € 457 million since 1994.

The Commission uses the various published reports as a part of its risk analysis when planning audit missions to the Member States.
