

1. Can the Commission therefore say why the draft CAP reform does not set aside a specific chapter devoted to young farmers?
2. Whether it is possible to incorporate in the draft reform an amendment to update Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999, proposing at least a 100 % increase in the setting-up aid, raising it to EUR 50 000?
3. Whether it is possible to incorporate in the draft reform an amendment to increase aid as a percentage of the volume of investment from 45 % and 55 % to 65 % and 75 % respectively for young farmers in lowland and mountain areas?
4. Whether it is possible to incorporate in the draft reform an amendment to suspend the system of State aids as regards direct aid to young farmers from the Member States and regional authorities?

(¹) OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 80.

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(3 April 2003)

1. Chapter II of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 (¹) is concerned solely with young farmers and the Commission must point out that substantial improvements have already been made under Agenda 2000.

First, the maximum eligible amount of both the setting-up premium and the interest subsidy were raised by 66 % from EUR 15 000 to EUR 25 000. Second, the maximum aid rate for farm investments can be raised by 5 percentage points for young farmers' investments during the first five years following establishment on the farm. Third, the maximum eligible early retirement aid, a measure indirectly benefiting young farmers by encouraging release of agricultural land, was raised by 50 % from EUR 10 000 to EUR 15 000 and Member States have the option of linking their use of this measure to the establishment of young farmers.

2. Thus there has been a considerable increase in aid from the previous to the present programming period. Moreover, in the case of authorised rural development measures, Article 52 of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 allows the Member States to provide additional financing which they must notify to the Commission for approval by including it in the rural development programmes.

3. Article 51(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 allows aid for certain types of farm investment to exceed the percentages set earlier in the Regulation. Thus Member States provide further finance by including in their development plans higher aid rates for young farmers for certain types of investment.

4. The Commission does not envisage any suspension of the system of State aid rules, which would result in distortion of competition between farmers in different Member States.

(¹) Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations — OJ L 160, 26.6.1999.

(2003/C 222 E/256)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0684/03

by María Sornosa Martínez (PSE) to the Commission

(7 March 2003)

Subject: Andalucía's Integrated Operating Programme and Community Funds

The Spanish Government has programmed a total of Euros 827 million in funds for measure 3,6 of Andalucía's Integrated Operating Programme, 'Protection and regeneration of the natural environment' (devoted to forestry activities, biodiversity and natural species). This figure is broken down into Euros 620 million ERDF aid and Euros 270 of national co-funding, a requirement which reflects the express

undertaking given when the programming was being drawn up, and is stated in the programme itself. Furthermore, EUR 118 million funding is earmarked for forestry, with EAGGF aid (measure 3,9 of the Programme). However, the latest meeting of the Programme's Monitoring Committee (Córdoba, June 2002) revealed a low level of implementation of the measure in question compared with the approved programming, responsibility for which falls directly on the Ministry for the Environment.

Given that:

- Regulation (EC) 1260/1991⁽¹⁾, lays down that if the required implementation levels are not reached, the scheduled Community aid could actually be cancelled,
- whereas the Andalusian autonomous community's Environment Ministry has approached the Commission (by letter of 12 September 2002 addressed to the DG for Regional Policy), requesting it to mediate in the affair, and investigate the possibility of assigning the funds directly to the Junta de Andalucía,
- the non-allocation of the funds by the Spanish Government is prejudicing the good environmental governance of Andalucía, which is an Objective 1 region,
- in a resolution on regional policy and structural fund management⁽²⁾ (paragraphs 2 and 12), the European Parliament pointed out that 'funding should be channelled as directly and efficiently as possible to the regions and local communities', regretted that 'the policy of control by central government is hampering the implementation of structural fund policies in the regions' and considered that 'the role of the central administration in Member States should not be one of domination but of coordination, support and assistance and providing a legality audit'.

Given what the DG for Regional Policy wrote on 1 October 2002, reference 110215, has the Commission received any proposal from the Andalusian Operating Programme 2000-2006's management authority which would resolve the implementation problems affecting the Programme's measure 3.6, the bulk of which is currently assigned to the Ministry of the Environment? Can the Commission state what stage has been reached in considering the proposal made to the Commission by the Junta de Andalucía's Ministry of the Environment?

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 284 E, 21.11.2002, p. 325.

Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission

(9 April 2003)

The Commission has been aware of the situation to which the Honourable Member refers since it was raised at the meeting of the Monitoring Committee for the Andalusia integrated operational programme held in Cordoba on 7 June 2002. Since then it has been seeking, in partnership with the Spanish authorities, to find an appropriate solution.

At the annual meetings on the management of the programmes, held in Madrid on 16 and 17 January 2003, and following several approaches by the Commission, the managing authority stated that the Ministry of the Environment, the main final beneficiary of these measures, had revised its investment programming and that it would ensure implementation of the annual payments for 2000 and 2001 for the measures 3,6 and 3,9 concerned as provided for in the programme.

The Commission can assure the Honourable Member that it is willing to consider as quickly as possible any measure notified to it by the managing authority.
