WRITTEN QUESTION E-3655/06
by Czesław Siekierski (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Surplus stocks in the new Member States

For a long time, the Commission has been preparing a proposal for a decision on surplus stocks of certain agricultural products held by the ten new Member States at the date of their accession. According to recent press reports, a decision on the financial penalties due should be taken in September of this year. The penalties imposed on the new Member States could be in excess of 100 million euro.

In the case of Poland, the Commission has reported surpluses for poultry meat, sheepmeat, cheese, rice, butter, garlic, butterfat, corn, tinned mandarins, hops and grape juice. Under the provisions of the Accession Treaty, all stocks of products in circulation within the territory of a new Member State on the date of accession in excess of the quantity that could be considered normal must be eliminated at the expense of the Member State concerned. This provision does not prohibit a new Member State from holding stocks at the date of accession, but merely requires that they be eliminated.

How has the Commission established that the alleged surpluses have not been eliminated in the new Member States? What legal instrument has the Commission used for determining the products and quantities deemed to be in surplus and thus needing to be eliminated at the expense of the new Member States? What timescale has the Commission planned for the elimination of allegedly surplus stocks in the new Member States? What methods should be used for this? What evidence must the new Member States provide concerning the elimination of these stocks? In calculating the allegedly surplus stocks, has the Commission taken account of long-term production and consumption patterns and changes in production conditions caused by climate change? Have surplus stocks caused any disruption of EU markets since enlargement in 2004?

A decision by the Commission to impose financial penalties of several million euros on the new Member States, including Poland, will have adverse social and economic effects. These payments could reduce the availability of funds for agricultural support within national budgets. It should be borne in mind that conditions of fair competition do not exist, since the new Member States do not receive the full amount of direct payments. Any financial penalties imposed would simply exacerbate the situation. This question is of great importance to Poland and it is to be hoped that the Commission will show understanding and support with a view to finding a favourable solution.