

**Question for written answer E-012310/2011  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Inese Vaidere (PPE)**

**Subject:** Commission proposal concerning direct payments under the CAP: the proposal's impact on the fairness of competition among the EU's farmers

Since 2005 the main purposes of the single payment scheme have been to stabilise farm incomes, promote the development of sustainable agriculture and bring about a reorientation to the market. In its existing form, regrettably, the CAP has not brought about fair competition in the European Union. The distribution of direct payments has been based on relatively out-dated indicators and criteria, on payments received historically. As a result, Latvia's farmers are still receiving €97/ha in direct payments – 35% of the EU average level of such payments.

Although the Commission's proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework provide for direct payments to Latvia to rise to €144/ha, that would still only amount to 54% of the EU average, perpetuating the present large disparities; at the same time, it is planned that Malta should receive the most: 157% of the EU average. Meanwhile farmers in the Netherlands, for example, would receive nearly €450/ha, despite the fact that conditions for farming there are no worse than in Latvia. There is no economic basis for such crass disparities in direct payments. Moreover, the Commission recommends introducing the increase in the financing gradually, with the maximum support level being attained only in 2017.

Does not the maintenance of such large disparities in direct payments, which are based on political rather than economic considerations, distort competition, bearing in mind that Latvia has completely opened up its markets to agricultural products from all countries?

Does the Commission agree that the new CAP should provide fair direct support payments to all farmers in the EU, distributing them in accordance with the objectives of the CAP and on the basis of objective economic and environmental criteria and indicators?

Would it not be a more economically justified solution to lay down minimum and maximum levels for direct payments, setting these figures at 80% and 120% of the EU average respectively?