

**Question for written answer E-003208/2015
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: The risks for the Italian rice sector arising from the proposed free trade agreement between the EU and Vietnam

The EU and Vietnam have recently reached the end of the eleventh round of negotiations concerning the setting-up of a free trade agreement between the two parties. Vietnam has a strong commercial interest in the rice sector, and is one of Europe's fiercest competitors in the market. It is forecast that Vietnamese rice exports will total 900 000 tonnes in the first quarter of 2015 and approximately 7 million for the whole year.

Some 51 % of the surface area in the EU that is given over to rice cultivation is located in Italy, with production concentrated mainly in the regions of Piedmont and Lombardy, but also in Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Sardinia, Tuscany and Calabria. 90 % of Italian rice is sold to the European market.

The closer trade ties recently forged with Cambodia and Burma, together with those currently being discussed with Vietnam, could potentially give the green light to substantial quantities of 'Indica' rice, being imported into the EU, which would then be sold in the internal market and result in serious market disruption.

A safeguard clause cannot be considered as a satisfactory solution, since it is known to be an instrument that is slow and complex to put into effect.

1. Is the Commission aware of the risks that an agreement with Vietnam could pose for the European rice sector?
2. Does the mandate given to the negotiators by the Council include rice among the products for which tariff concessions cannot be negotiated?