

Question for written answer E-004670/2016
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: EU-Turkey customs union and duties on agricultural products

The EC-Turkey Association Decision of 22 December 1995 established a customs union between the EU and Turkey with free movement of goods. In order to allow Turkey to overcome its inherent economic weaknesses at the time, exemptions were made for agricultural products on the understanding that they would be phased out progressively until trade balance could be fully restored in this sector. However, despite Turkey's remarkable economic growth in the intervening 21 years, it is continuing to enjoy these exemptions, which are resulting in distortions affecting bilateral Greek-Turkish trade, for example, with zero duty payable on imports of Turkish agricultural products, while Greek products are subject to excessively high duties, making them uncompetitive. According to the PanHellenic Exporters Association, the following duties are imposed by Turkey:

wheat flour: 102.6%
cheese: up to 180%
table olives: 39%
wine: 50%
fruit: 54%
vegetables: up to 49.5%.

This has resulted in total losses to Greece of almost EUR 1.5 billion in the decade from 2004 to 2013.

In view of this:

- Does the Commission consider that, given the significant economic growth enjoyed by Turkey in the 21 years following the conclusion of the agreement, there is any real reason to maintain high duties on EU agricultural products imported by it?

- What steps will it take to address these distortions of trade between the EU and Turkey in the agricultural sector?