

**Question for written answer E-001118/2018  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Michel Dantin (PPE)**

Subject: Phantom cows in the Netherlands

According to the Dutch Minister for Agriculture, Carola Schouten, 7 700 Dutch cattle holdings may have falsified calves' birth registrations by passing them off as twin births and registering them as the heifers of cows that had already calved.

The farmers' rigging may have enabled them to illegally extend their herds and thus increase their milk production, as heifers count as half a unit rather than a whole unit in the maximum quota of cows permitted per farm under Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources.

The scandal is all the more shocking because the Netherlands was granted a nitrates derogation under that legislation, subject to the country's farms not exceeding their phosphate ceilings.

- 1) What information does the Commission have and what measures does it intend to take against the Netherlands?
- 2) What impact could fraud of that kind have on the European milk market, which again finds itself in surplus owing to the lack of tools available to adapt supply to demand on the internal market and international markets?