

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0031/08
pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure
by Neil Parish, on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
to the Commission

Subject: Zero tolerance regime for unauthorised GMOs and economic consequences thereof

Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003¹ was adopted to regulate the placing on the market of genetically modified crops. The European Union is currently facing a rising number of incidents related to the adventitious presence of traces of genetically modified crops that are not yet authorised in the EU, but have already received approval from major trading partners of the EU. Although importers and stakeholders are acting with due diligence to avoid such incidents, they are likely to recur due to the introduction of new events in the exporting countries and the application of a zero tolerance regime for the presence of unauthorised GMOs in imports to the EU. This situation is worsening and is likely to result in ever higher feeding stuff prices in the EU.

1. Given the high import dependency of the EU for protein-rich feeding stuffs (e.g. soybean meal, corn gluten feed), how would the European Commission assess the consequences of the zero tolerance policy on the competitiveness of EU livestock production in the short term and in the long run?
2. How can the Commission justify the current situation in which even feeding stuffs with only small traces of unauthorised GMOs are banned, whereas meat derived from animals that were fed with these unauthorised GMOs can freely enter the EU, thus causing a major distortion of competition to the detriment of European farmers?
3. Is the Commission of the opinion that instead of the current zero tolerance regime, a threshold value (as is already the case for the adventitious presence of traces of authorised GMOs for labelling of products as 'GMO free') should be applied for the adventitious presence of traces of unauthorised GMOs that have already obtained a positive assessment from the EFSA or that have undergone a feed and food safety risk assessment in accordance with the CODEX GM plant guideline? Is the Commission planning to come forward with concrete proposals to that end?
4. Does the Commission expect the current situation, if left unchanged, to result in trade disputes with affected exporting countries, which could have negative implications for the export of certain European products? If so, how does the Commission intend to avoid these trade disputes?

Tabled: 02.04.2008

Forwarded: 04.04.2008

Deadline for reply: 11.04.2008

¹ OJ L 268, 18.10.2003, p. 1.