

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3657/06
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to the Commission

Subject: Disastrous drought in Poland

This year Poland is experiencing an exceptionally serious and widespread drought, a phenomenon which is becoming a serious problem not only for the countries of the Mediterranean, but also for those of central Europe, including Poland. Being essentially dependent on natural conditions, agricultural production is particularly vulnerable to the effects of drought.

Last year, the Commissioner responsible strove to alleviate the effects of the drought and fires suffered by southern Europe, particularly in Spain and Portugal. The measures taken to combat the drought in Portugal (including advance payments, release of emergency cereal stocks, authorisation to use set-aside land to feed livestock) were inadequate to deal with the effects of a disaster on this scale. Although necessary, these measures failed to offset the losses suffered by farmers.

No year goes by without some region of the European Union suffering the effects of climate disasters. The challenges we face as a result of climate change, with ever more frequent droughts, high temperatures, fires, freezing temperatures and floods, call for joint action at European, national and regional level. In order to curb their effects, appropriate systemic measures need to be developed and implemented in the European Union.

This year's drought has affected almost all regions of Poland. It is threatening the functioning of many farms and adversely affecting the quality of life in rural areas. If the current situation persists, problems could arise with water and energy supplies. It is estimated that the losses suffered by some farms at harvest time could number several tens of per cent.

By visiting the drought-stricken regions, the Commission representative could grasp the scale of the disaster afflicting farmers and their families. A visit of this kind would help to speed up the adoption and implementation of measures geared to the scale of the disaster. The gravity of the situation facing farmers requires immediate and effective action to be taken.

What assistance can the European Union offer to Polish farmers at present?

In the face of this natural disaster, can emergency financial aid be provided as quickly as possible from the European Union Solidarity Fund, in order to help the regions and populations affected?