

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2493/99
by Dominique Souchet (UEN)
to the Commission

Subject: Export refunds for processed food products

Export refunds are essential for ensuring that some EU food sectors are able to continue exporting European processed agricultural products on international markets. They constitute a logical and legitimate form of compensation for the difference in raw material prices in the EU compared with international prices, and are an essential component of the principle of Community preference.

The Commission proposal aimed at reducing the refund budget by 4.5% for products not included in Annex I had just been submitted at the time of the last meeting of the management committee. The proposal failed to obtain a qualified majority with 53 votes against, 28 abstentions and no votes in favour.

1. In view of this, does the Commission intend to adopt the proposal?
2. In the run-up to the WTO negotiations due to begin shortly in Seattle, does the Commission not consider that it is sending out a political signal that could undermine the maintenance of the principle of Community preference, which is a fundamental part of the CAP?