

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1900/00

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to the Commission

Subject: Outdated structures in Greek agriculture and distortion of competition: unlawful practices by ATE and the reimbursement of illegal aid by AGNO

One of the outdated structures in Greek agriculture is the Agricultural Bank of Greece (ATE) which, by practising an interventionist policy, has created unfair competition, distortions and illegal monopolistic financial practices in this sector. In its recent decision of 1 March 2000 the Commission requested (1) the return of 2.5 billion drachmas wrongfully received by AGNO, the dairy cooperative organisation, (2) information on the take-over of AGNO by ATE, (3) information on the relationship of the Greek state with ATE and (4) the dossier on partnership arrangements by the ATE. On this basis, can the Commission say:

1. how it views Greek agricultural structures and government policy in the agricultural sector in the light of repeated decisions by the Commission on the granting of illegal aid?
2. Does the investigation which led the Commission to take the above decision reveal any abuse by ATE of its dominant position in the Greek agricultural economy, and what measures should be taken to ensure that the rules of competition are adhered to and that farmers and businessmen receive equal treatment?
3. How does the Commission view ATE's take-over of AGNO and ATE's relationship with the Greek state, and what do ATE and the Greek Government undertake to do in the future in order to comply with the Community legal order concerning aid and competition?
4. Why did the Commission delay so much in taking this decision and why was the decision not announced when it was taken in March?
5. In the decision of 1 March 2000, was account taken of the viability of AGNO and, if so, what measures are envisioned to ensure its survival?