

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0914/01

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to the Commission

Subject: Poultry crisis in Italy

No doubt the Commission is aware of the poultry crisis which affected several regions of northern Italy in 1999, particularly Lombardy and Veneto.

In December 1999, there was an outbreak of the highly virulent influenza strain H7N1. The European Union and the government minimised the phenomenon, and the Commission did not give proper consideration to the fact that if vaccines were not used, the virus could become more virulent.

When later, in August 2000, influenza spread once again, the virus remained at a low level of pathogenicity thanks to vaccination. However, the EU and the Italian Government were not really troubled by the 9.4 million chickens which died or were killed in Lombardy alone (1 354 880 in the province of Bergamo, 4 728 357 in Brescia, 132 103 in Cremona and 3 254 676 in Mantua, representing 26% of total stocks).

The figures are striking in view of the sizes of the areas involved and the percentage of birds lost, which was 26% of a total of 36 480 000, and the fact that over 13 million birds were killed in Veneto. Without wishing to dramatise, it is a fact that the national health authorities and the technical Commission bodies acted in unison in backing the mass slaughter ideology. The result was that the actual breeders (not the livestock lessors) suffered enormous commercial losses (interruption of commercial activities for several months) caused by the steps taken by the veterinary authorities.

Can the Commission say whether:

it has been able to quantify these figures?

it has calculated the total compensation for 'interruption of commercial activities'?

it is true that, having made a promise at the negotiating table, the Italian Government cancelled the 360 billion lire subsidy allocated for the right to compensation for indirect loss (resulting from the interruption to breeding – lasting from four to nine months – caused by steps taken by the veterinary authorities)?

any EU aid has taken due account of compensation for these losses?

it has checked that the legislation governing viral emergencies in the bird-rearing sector is still appropriate, or whether it needs to be updated?