

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0007/02

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to the Commission

Subject: Incentives for young farmers in Tuscany

In the present situation an adequate rural development policy must include measures to reduce the average age of farmers by helping young farmers to set up their own holdings. This is one of the priorities of EU agricultural policy.

The Tuscany Region has taken consistent action to this end by implementing the 2000-2006 rural development plan and was the first region in Italy to fund around 3000 start-up projects for young farmers, giving their applications priority.

The Directorate-General for Agriculture, placing form before substance, does not appear willing to accept the revision of the funding plan proposed by the Tuscany Region to ensure that priority is given to young farmers. Nor does it appear to be prepared to accept the new situation. Community cofinancing of measures already taken therefore seems compromised and, as a result, both the Tuscany Region and the national authority responsible for payments, which have already paid out the funds, are facing serious difficulties.

Furthermore, the press was informed of DG Agriculture's decision before the Member State and Region. This is contrary to the spirit of cooperation and genuine partnership on which relations between the institutions should be based.

In the light of the above, will the Commission provide assurances that it will duly respect the interests of farmers and the action of the Tuscany Region, which is firmly resolved to implement the Community priorities through a renewed policy in favour of agriculture and rural development?