

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3167/02
by Daniela Raschhofer (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Subsidy fraud involving agricultural exports

An article in the 14 October 2002 issue of the 'Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung' raises the possibility that there may have been large-scale abuse of the EU customs rebates for Croatia and the former Yugoslavia in connection with illegal agricultural exports. The Greek authorities have identified consignments from Croatia containing more than one third of sugar cane from the Caribbean.

This prompts the following questions:

1. Since when has the Commission been aware of these irregularities?
2. Which agricultural products apart from sugar are also affected?
3. How large are the estimated sums lost to the EU as a result of these so-called 'carousel operations'?
4. According to information from a member of Commissioner Patten's staff, we could also be witnessing the effects of normal economic behaviour subject to absurd rules. Does the Commission plan to revise the agreement with the Balkan states in the light of this information?