

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3917/03
by Nelly Maes (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: European approval of government support for the livestock market in Leeuwarden

As a result of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Friesland in 2001, the livestock market in Leeuwarden had to be closed down. In order to reopen it had to meet extremely strict conditions, requiring major investment. With the help of funds from the province of Friesland, the municipality of Leeuwarden and the private sector, the necessary investments were made and the market reopened.

The Friesland provincial council decided to set up a foot and mouth disease emergency fund amounting to €6 353 000 and at the same time approved the granting of compensation under that fund.

In spring 2002 the foot and mouth disease compensation arrangements were forwarded to Brussels for approval. That approval is still awaited and until it is received the support earmarked for the livestock market cannot be paid. As a result of this delay, the FEC (Frisian Expocentre), the largest investor, is facing major cash flow problems and possible bankruptcy, with the potential loss of hundreds of jobs.

1. What is the problem with the granting of government aid to the Frisian Expocentre (public/private ownership) for investment in the livestock market as a result of the foot and mouth epidemic in Friesland in 2001?
2. Why is the procedure for granting European approval for the support referred to in paragraph 1 taking so long?