

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0528/04

by Guido Sacconi (PSE), Vincenzo Lavarra (PSE) and Pasqualina Napoletano (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Amendment of Regulation 753/2002 on the description, designation, presentation and protection of certain wine sector products

On 10 February the Management Committee for Wine deliberated on the amendment of Regulation 753/2002<sup>1</sup> on the description, designation, presentation and protection of certain wine sector products.

Since the committee was unable to deliver an opinion because of its failure to secure a qualified majority, responsibility for the future amendment of the regulation now lies solely with the Commission.

The amendment of the regulation concerns the indications to be included on wine labels. The terms previously used on European wine labels to indicate the production or ageing method or a particular quality, colour or place of production will no longer be protected against possible usurpation by non-European producers.

Since adopting its White Paper on Food Safety, the Commission has stood up for the rights of consumers, with a view to restoring and maintaining confidence in a sector plagued by scandals and doubts.

Consumers are entitled to be provided with information on the quality of foodstuffs and their ingredients and such information must be presented clearly to enable them to make informed choices.

For many years, consumer preferences in Europe have been moving towards healthier products produced by environment-friendly methods. Underpinning this trend has been the Commission's ongoing commitment to ensuring and safeguarding quality.

How can the Commission justify its amendment of this regulation, particularly in the light of the outcome of the vote in the Management Committee for Wine on 10 February (47 in favour, 20 against)?

Does the Commission not consider that the amendment of the regulation is at odds with trends in the rules previously adopted governing quality, protection of typical products and transparency?

In drawing up its proposal to amend the regulation, has the Commission taken account of the predominant position enjoyed by the European Union in the world wine market (accounting for 45% of wine-growing areas, 65% of production, 57% of consumption and 70% of exports)?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 118, 4.5.2002, p. 1