

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1387/04
by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Support for farmers in vulnerable areas

At a recent meeting with Horpozim (the Póvoa do Varzim Horticultural Growers' Association, with some 500 members), it was brought home to me how critical a period small farmers are going through, worsened in this case by the fact that they live and work in an area deemed vulnerable.

The existing levels of nitrates in the ground water originate in a range of factors, such as the lack of basic sewerage, industrial activity, cattle farms and the use of fertilisers, but the fact is that the only people who have to carry the consequences of the situation are farmers.

We are speaking about small family farms, measuring on average 1.5 hectares.

Given that the 600 euros in subsidy per annum per hectare they receive pays for little more than the technical support they need to control the level of nitrates on their holdings,

1. Is there any possibility of increasing subsidies to small farmers living in vulnerable areas and working in the horticultural sector?
2. What steps could be taken to support integrated measures to combat pollution of ground waters by nitrates in these vulnerable areas?