

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2069/05
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to the Commission

Subject: Crisis in the fruit and vegetable markets

2004 was marked by a serious crisis affecting the fruit and vegetable sectors of certain major EU producer countries, and primarily Italy.

The entry onto the European markets of very low cost products from traditionally non-exporting countries has put European producers on the ropes. Tomatoes, apples and citrus fruits from China, grapes from Chile, oil from Lebanon and cherries from Asia are just some examples of the fruit and vegetables that have literally swamped European markets. Imports from these countries are rising significantly and European producers' export capacities have fallen drastically, without even mentioning the stronger euro, meaning that the European Union is heading towards an alarming trade deficit in this sector.

This situation is further contributing to the depopulation of rural areas which, coupled with the phenomenon of industrial relocation, will at this rate lead to an increase in unemployment and general impoverishment in many EU regions.

What will the Commission do to ensure the survival of the European fruit and vegetable sector, which traditionally produces quality products and has helped keep rural areas populated? Since this is not a cyclical issue, does it not think it should adopt a more effective trade policy to this effect?