

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3397/05

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to the Commission

Subject: Protection of public health and the environment from the disposal and incineration of PVC waste

In Greece, it is common practice to burn in open spaces plastics (PVC) used on agricultural holdings, particularly flexible plastics for greenhouses, thus releasing substances which are hazardous to the environment and to public health. These soft plastics contain large quantities of phthalates and disposing of them, either by uncontrolled incineration or by landfill, is more hazardous to the environment and to public health than hard plastics which contain large quantities of chlorine and are usually recycled or buried. High rates of cancer and respiratory disease are recorded in farmers and hazardous substances are present in high concentrations in rural areas.

1. What measures will the Commission take to protect public health and the environment by preventing uncontrolled incineration in open spaces (incineration on land) or, where that is allowed, ensuring compliance with the provisions of Community directives?
2. What measures does the Commission intend taking to restrict the uncontrolled disposal of soft plastic waste from agricultural holdings, given that these materials are covered by Annex I of Directive 91/689/EEC¹ on hazardous waste, and by Annex I of Directive 91/156/EEC² on waste according to which disposal and recovery must not endanger human health or harm the environment?
3. Is it possible for regional administrations (prefectures and competent public authorities) to assume responsibility for the collection and safe disposal of these materials in order to protect public health without imposing a financial burden on farmers?
4. How much PVC is produced and how much PVC waste is disposed of in an uncontrolled manner in the EU and per Member State? What measures will the Commission take to restrict the disposal of PVC waste into the environment, given that, in 15 Member States of the Union alone, more than 600 000 tonnes of PVC waste are incinerated each year?

¹ OJ L 377, 31.12.1991, p. 20

² OJ L 78, 26.3.1991, p. 32