

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0674/06  
by Jean-Claude Martinez (NI)  
to the Council

Subject: Catastrophic situation facing European wine growers

The collapse in wine prices has left many European vineyards with a turnover of €20 000 a year and fixed costs of €15 000, in other words an annual income of €5 000, which is condemning thousands of families to poverty.

Jobs are disappearing, our villages are dying and wine growers in the South are having to sell their holdings to repay the banks.

This human tragedy is the result of the policies adopted by the European Commission, namely a reduction in customs tariff protection at the WTO, abandoning Community preference, free-trade agreements for wine with South Africa and the United States, failure to protect our PGIs, etc.

Although the Commission and Council are free to determine policy, they nevertheless have a duty to honour public commitments and to provide compensation for the devastating effects that their policies are having on the survival of wine growers in the South.

Does the Council intend:

1. to introduce a financial mechanism to eliminate European wine stocks?
2. to set up a European fund to honour public commitments and clear the debt owed by wine growers as a result of free-trade agreements destroying fair competition?
3. to set up a European territorial equalisation fund to compensate wine growers in the South who are being driven off their land by covert expropriation at injurious prices as a result of the free circulation of the financial power of purchasers from northern Europe?