

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2009/06

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to the Commission

Subject: Protective measures against avian influenza

The H5N1 virus, which poses a threat to humans, has been detected in several countries in recent months, including a number of EU Member States. The relevant authorities' information policy and the protective measures in some of those Member States affected were sadly inadequate.

Many international measures have already been put in place in order to prevent avian influenza from being brought in. Countries in which outbreaks of avian influenza have occurred must be regarded as 'risk countries'. The UN has issued emphatic warnings on several occasions about the possible outbreak of a pandemic. The Commissioner for health and consumer protection, Mr Kyprianou, also recently issued fresh and urgent warnings regarding a worldwide pandemic of avian influenza.

The EU finally reacted and at the beginning of April 2006 took a so-called restriction decision. Under this decision, farms within a 13km radius of an infected farm will be banned from exporting any meat to EU Member States or third countries. The ban will remain in effect initially for four weeks, although it is only applicable in the EU countries

1. What concrete measures does the Commission propose to take in order to prevent the introduction of avian influenza through airports, railway stations and motorways etc.? When will it draw up binding regulations and orders?
2. What checks will be carried out on airport travellers, as well as on motor vehicles, buses and heavy goods vehicles coming from third countries or EU Member States? According to our information, different control measures are in place in each Member State. Would it not be wise to introduce a set of standardised EU-wide protective measures, compulsory for all, in order to heighten security?
3. Despite the warnings about avian influenza, many travellers and traders are secretly bringing poultry into the EU. Should they not be required to undertake in writing, by way of a system of 'self-declaration', to stop importing any poultry or products derived from poultry? To what extent can fines be imposed if they do so in breach of this declaration?