

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2045/06

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to the Commission

Subject: State aid test for agricultural landscapes

In view of the significant loss of valued countryside in the Netherlands and the fact that since 2003 there has been some confusion in this area and problems concerning the state aid test, can the Commission clarify the following points:

Does the Commission agree that:

- linear and non-linear features of the landscape (such as ponds, watercourses, single trees and hedges) are an integral part of our countryside and cultural heritage?
- the management of these features of the landscape is not an economic activity?
- the use of public funds for the management of landscape components by private individuals is not eligible for support within the meaning of Article 87(1) of the Treaty and therefore does not have to be reported to the European Commission?
- sustainable management of features of the landscape requires a commitment for a period of more than five years and private law contracts for periods of up to 30 years are authorised?
- the EC cannot impose restrictions on the use of public funds to maintain and conserve the agricultural landscape outside the Netherlands national network of protected areas?