

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2856/06
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to the Commission

Subject: Reform of the CMO in bananas

The banana industry, which in Europe's case is based predominantly in the outermost regions, is an important source of employment given the type of cultivation inherent in banana growing. In these regions, which already face structural handicaps, and where unemployment is markedly higher than in other EU regions, bananas play an essential economic and social role which cannot be compensated for by any other form of agriculture.

Indeed, in the Caribbean as on Madeira, no agricultural alternative exists to banana production, which also makes a not insignificant contribution to the tourist industry and rural development.

Speaking about the new draft regulation on the reform of the CMO in bananas, Commissioner Fischer Boel expressed the desire to 'ensure that for every euro spent, the maximum possible benefits derive for the whole of the agriculture sector in the [producer] regions and their rural fabric'.

With this in mind, and since the manpower costs paid by European companies are partly covered by the Community aid paid to producers and these are considerably higher than the costs in Central American countries, how will the Commission ensure the survival of banana production, which is so vital to the outermost regions and their rural fabric, and maintain a high level of employment in accordance with the goals set in the Lisbon Strategy?