

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3269/06
by Jean-Claude Fruteau (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Fair trade

The pressure currently being exerted by the increasing opening of markets worldwide poses a serious threat to the viability of our various agricultural models and to our ability to root them in an approach geared to sustainable development. Forcing farmers to adapt to what increasingly resemble liquidation prices erodes their income, thereby jeopardising their livelihood. The pressure for low-cost production causes farmers to forego concerns about working conditions for agricultural workers and respect for the environment.

Fair trade can and should offer an alternative to this situation whereby the lowest bidder is favoured, undermining the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, it is crucial for the Commission to send out a strong political signal without delay in support of a trade system based on production methods that ensure producers a fair income and remove any temptation of social or environmental dumping. The growing popularity of fair-trade products with European consumers can only aid such an initiative.

With this in mind, how does the Commission intend to give fresh impetus to and boost the development of fair trade? Will it take steps to convince the Union's WTO partners of the benefit of introducing specific tariff measures (differentiated approach, GSP+) giving preferential treatment to fair-trade products?