

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5587/06  
by Albert Jan Maat (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Funding for a system to monitor organic products

Monitoring of organic products from third countries is far from perfect, and many products are only checked on paper, on the basis of import permits. The new agreement on organic production, which will probably be concluded next month, will improve transparency and monitoring, but problems will persist.

The biggest problem remains the shortage of funding for European monitoring in third countries, which makes it difficult to operate effectively and to monitor imports properly at source. For next year, the Commission's DG Health and Consumer Protection, which is responsible, has not allocated a single euro to checking inspection systems in countries on the list of third countries. Countries on this list have systems of control comparable to the production rules and inspection systems equal to those within the European Union.

- Why has the appropriate department of the Commission not earmarked any funding for the inspection of monitoring systems in third countries? Without actual checks, how does that department intend to guarantee the organic content of organic products and to safeguard the competitive position of European farmers in this context?

In addition, there is no funding for the inclusion of countries outside the EU on the list of third countries. Such a system reduces bureaucracy and facilitates monitoring in the long term. Only one country per year can be added because of the limited funding available for the purpose, whereas more than 14 countries, including China, are already on the waiting list.

- Why is the Commission allocating so little funding to the acceptance of countries onto the list of third countries? Does this not run counter to the aim of combating bureaucracy and promoting transparency?