

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3752/07  
by Béatrice Patrie (PSE)  
to the Council

Subject: Hectare premium for chestnut production

Chestnut production varies between 10 000 and 13 000 tonnes per year in France. Predominantly based on traditional chestnut groves, it is an aspect of local heritage, with a strong identity of its own, and an important part of the farming economy in difficult and disadvantaged regions in south-eastern and south-western France.

Chestnut growing is essential to the continued well-being of rural areas and environmental protection through the preservation of open forests, which help to prevent the spread of fires and sloping soil erosion.

It provides a very large number of family farms with a livelihood and plays a social role in rural communities.

Over the last few years there has been increasingly strong external competition from countries such as China and Turkey, in terms of both prices and volumes.

This competition from low-production-cost countries is having a major destabilising effect on the European market and producers' incomes.

Chestnut growing is steadily diminishing owing to the disappearance of family farms, many planters being discouraged by the unprofitable nature of the sector and the lengthy amount of time required to start up production.

These were the reasons for granting aid to nut growers under Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003<sup>1</sup>. These provisions are important to the survival of such crops, but do not cover chestnuts.

Chestnut growers are now asking for their sector to be covered by these provisions.

Would the Council be prepared to consider a revision of Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003 with a view to including chestnuts among the crops eligible for the single payment, by analogy with the aid granted to other nut growers?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 270, 21.10.2003, p. 1.