

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0288/08

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to the Commission

Subject: COM in sugar: an unsustainable reform

Under the 2006 reform of the COM in sugar, the quota system was to be used as a means of regulating the market for public-interest purposes. The Commission reserved the right to make any necessary adjustments after the termination of the restructuring fund in 2010 and, with a view to ensuring flexibility at national level, authorised Member States to alter the quotas of undertakings in order to prevent producers from being penalised and to protect the interests of all stakeholders. On 26 September 2007 the EU agriculture ministers decided that undertakings could surrender part of their quota for the 2008/2009 marketing year in return for being exempted from paying the restructuring levy for the previous year. This quota surrender operation, to be implemented in two phases (January and March 2008), is intended to result in a 3.8 million tonne cut in EU sugar production.

The Sadam Eridania sugar factory in Jesi has been constantly upgraded over the years, making it one of the most efficient production plants in Italy. It can take in 14 000 tonnes of raw material per day and process up to 12 000, with an end-product of 1 350 tonnes of sugar. In 2001, in partnership with Edison SpA, it built a power station which supplies steam as a product of co-generation and reduces the amount of electricity taken from the national grid, thus cutting the factory's costs by 15%. In order to be able to compete with other European producers, it also built a chromatography system, the power for which comes exclusively from the gas turbine power station.

Can the Commission say:

- whether it has any figures for the economic and social damage caused by the quota reduction operation, which, in the Marche region alone, has totally devastated the sugar industry, with the closure of the Fano and Fermo plants and the announcement that the Sadam plant in Jesi is to close? Is the closure of a technologically advanced plant at which high-quality sugar is produced very cheaply in keeping with the renewed Lisbon Strategy?
- if it can see any public interest in the adverse impact of the COMs in tobacco and sugar on the thousands of families and workers (including seasonal workers) who are without work, and whether an undertaking can take part in the quota reduction scheme if it has signed a conversion programme agreement and concluded a contract for the 2008/2009 marketing year under which beet is to be grown on an area in excess of 10 000 hectares?