

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2628/08
by Lily Jacobs (PSE) and Dorette Corbey (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Conscientious objections to eartagging of cattle

Within the European Union, it is compulsory to eartag cattle. This is required in order to identify and register them. In the Netherlands, a few farmers have expressed conscientious objections to the practice. Regulation (EC) No 911/2004¹ implementing Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000² permits alternative methods of registration by way of derogation. Unexpectedly, the derogation which the Netherlands wished to make for farmers with conscientious objections to eartagging was not accepted by the Commission. Farmers who do not eartag their cattle but use an alternative registration system now have 20% deducted from their farm payment, so that economically it is virtually impossible to use alternative registration methods.

1. What solution could there be for the Dutch farmers who have conscientious objections to eartagging? What adjustments need to be made to the alternative registration system to make it acceptable to the Commission?
2. Some farmers with conscientious objections were given the impression that the derogation would be accepted. A reliable public authority should therefore compensate the loss of income in full. Can the Netherlands pay full compensation to the farmers concerned without violating European rules?
3. How could the registration and identification of cattle by means of eartagging ultimately be replaced with more reliable chips?

¹ OJ L 163, 30.4.2004, p. 65.

² OJ L 204, 11.8.2000, p. 1.