

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4144/08
by Florencio Luque Aguilar (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: New aid scheme for cotton

Under the new aid scheme for cotton, production in Spain will fall by two-thirds (from the 350 000 tonnes harvested prior to the 2004 reform to 90 000 tonnes) and the area eligible for 'coupled' aid will shrink from 90 000 hectares to 48 000 hectares. Two-thirds of the ginning factories in Spain will be required to close and restructuring aid will not be available until 2010, which will further prolong the difficulties which those factories are experiencing. Not only does the decision not meet the sector's requirements, it does not comply with the judgment issued by the Luxembourg-based European Court of Justice in 2006. Pursuant to that judgment, one of the aims of the Greek and Spanish Accession Protocols was to prevent cotton from being replaced by another crop - an aim which the decision does not serve. Under the new scheme neither the area which existed prior to the 2004 reform or even prior to Spain's accession to the EU (approximately 60 000 hectares) will be safeguarded.

What has the Commission to say on this matter?

Will the Commission explain why restructuring aid is to be delayed until 2010?