

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0520/09
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to the Commission

Subject: External trade - American decision to increase customs duty on some European products

On 15 January the US Trade Representative announced the intention to modify the list of European Union (EU) products subject to additional customs duty, in connection with the dispute on hormone beef at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Through this decision the US Administration is activating its trade sanctions system, known as the 'carousel law'. It will thus be able to revise the list of products subject to sanctions every six months.

The products concerned include Roquefort, a sheep's milk cheese produced solely in France, which has already been subject to heavy customs duty (100%) since 1999 and which will be subject to customs duty of 300% with effect from 23 March 2009.

Given the WTO's rules, is this American decision legal?

How can the Commission provide reassurance for the producers affected by this decision?

Will the European Union, acting through the Commission, commence proceedings on this issue before the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body, as has been announced within the last few days?

In the interests of transparency, can the Commission undertake to inform the public of the steps that it is taking on this issue?