

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1772/09
by Jules Maaten (ALDE)
to the Commission

Subject: The potential adoption of use of the chemical food additive CMC in wine

The use of the chemical ingredient CMC (carboxymethyl cellulose – E466) for tartrate stabilisation of wines is currently being considered for adoption into EU law by the Commission, while the specifications of the requisite CMC Resolution by the OIV (International Organisation for Wine and Vine) will not be ready before June 2010. Equally worrying is the allergenicity risk of CMC, as mentioned in the CMC Resolution, not only in terms of the (lack of) awareness of winemakers and consumers, but also in terms of leading to (early) wine labelling discussions.

The above issues are causing winemakers and consumers concern as to how the correct use of CMC will be verified after EU adoption, given that the specifications regarding this complex ingredient for use in wine are not yet – technically or legally – complete. As a consequence, importers will not (be legally required to) verify the exact status of wine ingredients, as already recently demonstrated in a case where CMC was being illegally sold and used in wine from Argentina.

1. What is the Commission's view of the fact that wine containing the (non-approved) additive CMC is now being sold on the European market?
2. Given the above concerns, which involve, moreover, a market distortion for European winemakers, does it sound reasonable to the Commission that the decision on whether to allow CMC in wine should be postponed until the required specifications are adopted by the OIV in June 2010?
3. What is the Commission's opinion on the potential use of CMC in wines in view of its ambiguous status (allergenicity risk, origin issue, dosage etc.)? If adopted in EU law, will this substance be included in the regulations on the labelling of allergens in wines by December 2010?