

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1401/10
by Kader Arif (S&D) and Patrice Tirolien (S&D)
to the Commission

Subject: International agreement on bananas

In December 2009, an international agreement on trade in bananas was concluded. On the one hand, this agreement establishes the withdrawal of Latin American countries from proceedings taken against the EU under the WTO, and on the other hand, the progressive reduction of European import tariffs imposed on Latin American countries, which means a total reduction of 35% on tariffs for bananas.

In addition to bolstering the EU's position vis-à-vis the WTO, the agreement entails a significant reduction in the advantages given to banana producers from ACP countries, which until now, have benefited from preferential tariffs. It is greatly to be feared that this heightened competition in the worldwide trade in bananas will not allow producers to maintain their export levels into the EU and that this will have a significant impact on their economy, which is too often reliant on export crops. Europe's outermost regions will face the same problem, and it is feared that this will lead to significant consequences for these countries that produce more than 10% of the bananas sold in Europe.

In this context, can the Commission indicate if impact assessments were carried out to accurately evaluate the consequences of the agreement for both ACP countries and the outermost regions in terms of export capacity, production and employment?

Having announced that the sum of EUR 200 million will be allocated to assist banana producing ACP countries, will the Commission indicate the basis for its assessment that this amount will be enough to help these countries overcome the challenge they face? Given that 'the diversification of the economy' is a priority of the accompanying measures for bananas, what new sectors does the Commission intend to help banana companies and their employees to move into?

Can it also indicate why similar accompanying measures were not planned for the outermost regions? Is there a plan to assist these regions on the basis of their specific needs, and to attenuate the job-related and social consequences of this agreement?