

**Question for written answer E-8702/2010
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Limits on the cadmium content of fertilisers in the EU

One of the EU's longest-term environmental legislative projects, namely that concerning common limits on the cadmium content of fertilisers, has divided Member States largely on the basis of their location. When they acceded to the EU in 1995, Finland, Sweden and Austria were granted a derogation allowing them to maintain stricter limits on cadmium content than other Member States. The reasons for this lay in the general desire to limit the use of cadmium and its compounds because of their high toxicity, as well as agricultural traditions. In Finland's case the derogation lapsed on 31 December 2005, at which point Finland asked the Commission to extend it. On 3 January 2006 the Commission decided to allow Finland the derogation, which is now to remain in force until harmonised measures relating to the cadmium content of fertilisers are agreed at EU level.

In 2003 the Commission drafted a regulation which would, in three stages, have substantially reduced cadmium levels in most Member States and placed Member States in the same position. However, the southern Member States and the EU's largest fertiliser producers regarded the Commission's proposals as a threat to their fertiliser production, while the decision would also have had a severe impact on the North African countries which are the EU's largest phosphate suppliers and whose phosphate contains high levels of cadmium. The proposal was opposed inter alia by invoking the lack of purification technology and the fact that in practice the decision would create a monopoly position for certain Russian producers which use land free of cadmium and other heavy metals. At the same time, there would have been significant job losses within the EU, especially in Southern Europe. However, areas have been found within the EU where the phosphate is free of such contamination, for example in Sokli in Finland. Samuli Pohjamo, a Finnish Member, tabled Question E-2164/03 concerning this matter, in reply to which the Commission promised to draft a regulation concerning it, which, however, it has evidently not succeeded in doing.

Has the Commission monitored the situation since 2003 and consulted the parties with the aim of making it possible to agree common limits on cadmium levels in the near future? Has the Commission made calculations in order to assess any environmental benefits, effects on employment in the EU, impact on trade with third countries and other possible effects, and what are the conclusions as things now stand? What are the strongest reasons if common limits are not to be introduced in the near future?