

**Question for written answer E-012629/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Sustainability issues arising from industrial livestock production

Industrial livestock production is dependent on feeding substantial quantities of grain to animals. Commission data show that around 58% of EU cereal production is used as animal feed.

Feeding cereals to animals is inefficient as much of their food value is lost during conversion from plant to animal matter. The nutritional value consumed by animals in eating a given quantity of cereals is much greater than that delivered for humans by the resultant meat¹. The 2011 European Nitrogen Assessment (ENA) states that crops only take up 30-60% of the nitrogen fertiliser applied to them and that only 10-50% of the nitrogen in animal feed is retained by the animal. The nitrogen that is not absorbed by the crops and the animals is lost to the environment where, according to ENA, it poses threats to the quality of water, soil and air as well as to the greenhouse balance, ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Foresight report on 'The future of food and farming' stresses that, per calorie, grain-fed meat requires considerably more resources to produce than other food items², while the ENA states that 'Human use of livestock in Europe, and the consequent need for large amounts of animal feed, is therefore the dominant human driver altering the nitrogen cycle in Europe'.

The ENA concludes that lowering consumption of animal protein in the EU to the level recommended by health experts would benefit both the environment and human health, since the high levels of meat consumption that have been made possible by industrial farming are associated with an increased risk of heart disease, obesity and certain cancers³.

What steps does the Commission plan to take to moderate the production and consumption of grain-fed meat in the EU in the interests of resource efficiency, the environment and human health?

¹ Lundqvist, J., de Fraiture, C. Molden, D., 2008. Saving Water: From Field to Fork – Curbing Losses and Wastage in the Food Chain. SIWI Policy Brief. SIWI.
http://www.siw.org/documents/Resources/Policy_Briefs/PB_From_Filed_to_Fork_2008.pdf

² UK Government Office for Science, 2011. The future of food and farming: challenges and choices for global sustainability: executive summary. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/foresight/docs/food-and-farming/11-546-future-of-food-and-farming-report>

³ Westhoek H., Rood T., van den Berg M., Janse J., Nijdam D., Reudink M. and Stehfest E., 2011. The protein puzzle: the consumption and production of meat, dairy and fish in the European Union. PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
http://www.sciencedomain.org/download.php?f=1318660269-Westhoeketal_2011EJFRR892.pdf&aid=262