

**Question for written answer E-003263/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Carlo Fidanza (PPE)

Subject: Increase in rice imports from Myanmar

The increase in rice imports from least developed countries (LDCs) is disrupting the EU market in cultivated rice. Current data show that Myanmar, which, thanks to the 'Everything but Arms' scheme, joined the EU duty-free import scheme only in June 2013 (but with retroactive effect to June 2012), poses a serious threat to the EU rice market. In the last marketing year, zero-duty imports from that country concerned approximately 4600 tonnes of milled rice; from September 2013 to February 2014, however, around 8800 tonnes of milled rice were imported, of which 3760 tonnes in February 2014 alone. The Myanmar Rice Industry Association (MRIA) has stated that the export of parboiled rice, which can rely on a processing capacity exceeding 1000 tonnes per day, will reach 300 000 tonnes in the marketing year 2014/2015, as compared to the 30 000 tonnes recorded in 2013. Between December 2013 and February 2014, duty-free imports from of parboiled long grain milled rice from Myanmar already amounted to 600-900 tonnes per month, compared to about 100-150 tonnes per month in the period September-November 2013.

This situation, together with imports from Cambodia, is posing a serious risk to the market of EU-grown rice, in which Italy plays a leading role in terms of surface area and production. Meanwhile, the price of paddy rice on the Vercelli market is stable, at EUR 264/tonne, but as at 11 March 2014 there are 244 000 tonnes of paddy stocks, i.e. 73 000 tonnes more than one year ago, and deliveries of Italian rice to EU countries in the first four months of the marketing year decreased by 19 000 tonnes.

This crisis is affecting not only operators in the rice sector but also its satellite industries and the national processing industry. Moreover, the latest update provided by the Commission highlights a significant increase in licences issued for the importation of milled rice into the European Union.

In the light of the above and of a previous question on rice imports, with special reference to Cambodia (E-013713/2013 – Rice imports from least developed countries), can the Commission say what action it intends to take and whether, given the trend of the last few months, the conditions are in place to adopt safeguard measures as provided for by Regulation (EC) No 978/2012?