

**Question for written answer E-004318/2014  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Esther de Lange (PPE)**

Subject: Revision of regulations on organic production: greenhouse production

A level playing field within the EU is of the utmost importance to producers. Differences in the use and explanation of EU law in Member States may cause unfair competition.

In 2009 the Commission established the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP) in order to receive advice on several issues, including organic production of crops in greenhouses. The EGTOP Subgroup on Glasshouse Production published a report in September 2013 and DG AGRI is taking it into consideration both for preparing the legislative proposals to implement Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 and for the revision of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.

Hydroponic systems based on plant fibre substrates are becoming increasingly available on the market, sold in modular, pre-packaged formats. Except for the composition of the substrate material, these systems are based on the same principles as those of the materials mentioned in Article 2(g) of Regulation (EC) No 889/2008.

1. Does the Commission consider production on plant fibre substrates to be hydroponic? Would the Commission consider rephrasing Article 2(g) in order to clarify that plant fibre substrates are included in the definition of hydroponic systems?

In a number of Member States, national authorities allow the use of 'demarcated beds' in organic greenhouse production, as an exception to the principle of soil-based production. In its Final Report on Greenhouse Production, EGTOP recommends maintaining this exception for existing practices but prohibiting further expansion of such systems within organic production in these or other Member States. Article 22.2 of Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 clarifies that exceptions to the general production rules 'shall be kept to a minimum and, where appropriate, limited in time'.

2. Is the Commission considering putting a time limit on the exception for organic production in demarcated beds?
3. If a specific exception for demarcated beds is accepted, how does the Commission plan to ensure transparency and consumer confidence?
4. Does the Commission recognise a category in between organic and non-organic?