

**Question for written answer E-005627/2014
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Reimer Böge (PPE)

Subject: Compensation for damage caused by geese

The number of birds – including barnacle geese (*Branta leucopsis*) and greylag geese (*Anser anser*), both protected species – either resting or resident in the German region of Schleswig-Holstein, has dramatically increased in the last few years, and the resulting damage to agricultural areas through grazing has reached alarming levels. Cereal and oilseed rape crops on the mainland (especially the west coast) and grassland on the islands and *Halligen*¹ are particularly affected.

The current Schleswig-Holstein draft rural development programme for the 2014-2020 programming period allows for EAFRD subsidies only in respect of damage to green arable land (regrowth from stubble, winter cereals, winter rape, grass as a crop, summer cereals etc.) (see p. 155 of the partial draft of 8 April 2014). Under this programme the owners of grassland on the islands and *Halligen*, whose livelihoods are also threatened by costs and loss of income, would have no claim to compensation for damage caused by geese. The regional government explains this restriction by reference to the new agricultural subsidy rules for 2014-2020 (2014/C 204/1), which entered into force on 1 July 2014.

This claim is in stark contrast to the fact that EU expressly encourages farmers, through the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives etc., to tolerate protected bird species.

Are compensation payments to grassland owners for grazing damage by geese compatible with the provisions of the EU Guidelines for state aid in the agriculture and forestry sector 2014 to 2020 (2014/C 204/1), in particular point 244 et seqq.?

¹ Translator's note: Small, sparsely inhabited islands without flood protection. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halligen> .