

Question for written answer E-000708/2019
to the Commission
Rule 130
Eleftherios Synadinos (NI)

Subject: Consideration of financial incentives for farmers to abandon sheep and goat farming

Sheep and goat farming is of paramount importance in the Greek primary production sector and has a long tradition: it produces highly exportable dairy products (yoghurt, PDO products, such as feta, etc.) and makes a positive contribution to the economy, the environment and society. It is competitive and has a dynamic growth potential; appropriate investment in infrastructure and know-how would attract a new generation of skilled stockbreeders. However, if it is to remain viable, a critical mass of livestock must be maintained.

It has been reported¹ that financial incentives are being considered to encourage farmers to abandon the sheep and goat sector. Similar European 'incentives' in other sectors (e.g. tobacco production) have had a negative impact.

By indirectly favouring intensive sheep and goat farming over the extensive rearing system, the eligibility conditions for such abandonment measures are likely to discriminate against the latter. The need to preserve rural biodiversity and the added value and quality of the products of the diverse sheep and goat farming sector are overlooked, while industrialised livestock units in some countries are being provocatively and exclusively promoted to the detriment of the situation on the ground in the countryside.

In view of the above, can the Commission say:

- 1) Is there any basis for these reports?
- 2) What political course does it intend to adopt and what guidelines have been issued to technical staff?
- 3) Does it agree on the need for comprehensive, continuous and uninterrupted support for small and medium-sized producers, who often exploit and maintain traditional methods and domestic, indigenous breeds of farm animal and find a use for disadvantaged areas which cannot be used for any other purpose, particularly in island, mountainous and remote areas?

¹ <https://www.agronews.gr/ekmetaleuseis/aigoprovatotrofia/173031/gennaio-prim-tis-koinotitas-gia-exodo-ton-provatotrofon-apo-to-epaggelma/>