Question for written answer E-000176/2020
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Private stocks of olive oil and safeguard clauses

Under Regulation (EU) 2016/605, Tunisia was granted a temporary duty-free quota of 35 000 tonnes of olive oil for export to the European Union in 2016/2017, which seriously depressed the market on the eve of the new olive oil marketing year, particularly in southern Italy.

The safeguard clause in the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement [1] can be activated only when imports cause, or are in danger of causing, serious damage to national producers or difficulties which could seriously damage the economic situation in a region.

On 14 October 2019, the then European Commissioner for Agriculture, Phil Hogan, admitted that the olive oil sector was currently in difficulty because of the low prices and said that it was top of the list of Commission concerns, for which reason the Commission would set up an aid scheme for private storage, which could be activated in the event of serious market disruption in certain regions [2] .

European olive oil production is expected to total 2.1 million tonnes next season, but, as Phil Hogan admitted, this is not enough to reduce the large stocks accumulated in recent years.

Can the Commission indicate:

what action it intends to take to protect the olive oil sector;

in the light of these difficulties, what view it takes of the activation of the safeguard clauses in the agreement with Tunisia?

1 Article 27 in conjunction with Article 25 of the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement.
2 Commission Regulation (EC) No 2153/2005 of 23 December 2005 on the aid scheme for the private storage of olive oil.