

ORAL QUESTION H-0277/03

for Question Time at the part-session in May 2003
pursuant to Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure
by Ioannis Patakis
to the Commission

Subject: Threat to Greek tobacco growers' incomes as a result of 'blackmail' by tobacco merchants

Tobacco merchants in Greece, with the complicity of the government, are using vague allegations that the intense rainfall in the country has spoiled the quality of tobacco of the oriental variety harvested in 2002 to pressure tobacco growers into selling their produce at rock-bottom prices and in contravention of applicable contracts. Thus, although the marketing period is officially over, large quantities of oriental tobacco remain unsold and producers therefore also run the risk of losing the related Community subsidies. Furthermore, the prices for the tobacco which has been sold are also rock-bottom compared with last year and the incomes of farmers who are possibly the poorest in Greece and the EU have therefore plummeted.

What measures will the Commission take to ensure that all tobacco of the oriental variety in Greece is marketed and tobacco growers' incomes safeguarded?

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