

ORAL QUESTION H-0365/03

for Question Time at the part-session in July 2003

pursuant to Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure

by Rosa Díez González

to the Commission

Subject: Fraud relating to European Union grants towards flax cultivation in Spain

Judge Garzón, who is the investigating magistrate responsible for the 'flax case' in Spain, which was investigated by OLAF, has charged Mr Gonzalo Ruiz Paz, the former financial director of Mercasa, and Mr Nicolás López de Coca, the former director-general of the national agency for intervention in agriculture (Fondo Español de Garantía Agraria), with fraudulent handling of Community funds. At the time the fraud was committed, both held key roles managing European Union financial assistance to which they had been appointed by the then Spanish minister for agriculture and current European Commissioner Mrs Loyola de Palacio. Given that at the meeting prior to her appointment as a Commissioner, she said she would resign if any of her senior colleagues were implicated during the judicial investigation, I would like to ask if Mrs De Palacio is considering resigning in the wake of the charges filed against her colleagues with regard to the fraudulent use of European Union grants towards flax cultivation in Spain? Is the President of the Commission considering taking any action, given the obvious responsibility of one of his Commissioners in a fraud against the European Union budget?

Tabled: 28.05.2003

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