

ORAL QUESTION O-0048/00

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Gilles Savary and Evelyne Gebhardt, on behalf of the PSE Group  
to the Commission

Subject: Problems in the forestry sector following the storms in December 1999

The scale of the economic consequences for the forestry industry of the exceptionally strong storms which struck Europe on 25 and 27 December is now becoming apparent.

In the short term, the forestry sector is faced with wind break stocks equivalent to three to four years of normal harvesting, which are causing prices to collapse to levels that in some cases are lower than the cost of restoring the damaged plots.

In some regions, this unprecedented situation is exposing coniferous forests to a serious risk of fire and could jeopardise rapid reforestation. In the case of other forests, there are fears that the wood that has fallen may become unsuitable for marketing due to damage being caused by bark beetles, small insect parasites, which are damaging wood irreparably.

In the longer term, economic repercussions for the primary processing industries are to be feared. In two years' time they will be faced with a shortage of local supplies and supply prices which will have a crippling effect on their competitiveness.

Regulation of the wood market is therefore needed at the European level in order to defer harvests and to support prices for forestry products today by adopting measures for the storage of wood which is able to be stored and by ensuring that the rest is placed on the market as a matter of priority, by means of transitional measures to provide assistance for transport and export.

1. In this connection, does the Commission intend to introduce, on an entirely exceptional and transitional basis, measures for the regulation of the wood market and wood prices in order to soften the dual economic impact which is being felt today by the forestry sector and which will be felt tomorrow by the processing industries?
2. To what extent, and in accordance with what procedures, is the Commission prepared to implement Article 87.2b of the Treaty by authorising the Member States concerned to subsidise exports, including exports to countries outside the Community, of the most delicate species and the most difficult to preserve and store and the most exposed to risks of fire or parasitic infestation?
3. What arrangements have been made, measures adopted and appropriations committed by the European Union to date pursuant to Article 30 of Council Regulation (EC) 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999<sup>1</sup> on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) by way of compensation for damage caused to the European forestry sector by the exceptionally strong storms of 25 and 27 December 1999?

Tabled: 30.03.2000

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Deadline for reply: 10.04.2000

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 80