

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2771/99
by Clemente Mastella (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Apparent European ban on wood-fired ovens

Recent reports in the Italian press, subsequently officially denied by a European Commission spokesman, have brought to light the apparent existence of a European Union directive banning the use of wood-fired ovens for food preparation, if they fail to comply with the new European hygiene standards. All this has raised understandable alarm in the gastronomic world in Italy, in particular in the traditional Neapolitan pizza sector, the very symbol of Italian cuisine, which is renowned and appreciated throughout the world, and the preparation of which requires the use of a clay oven.

Press reports also suggest that it was only thanks to a series of Commission communications that Italy managed to secure temporary derogations from the ban although many Italian municipalities have already begun to stop granting any further authorisations or licences to install new wood-fired ovens fearing that sooner or later they may be banned by law definitively.

- Can the Commission therefore clarify the state of affairs described above by indicating whether or not such legislation exists, not least to safeguard the consumer's right to accurate information?
- If so, on the basis of what health and safety considerations was the directive issued?
- Does the Commission not consider that the indirect effect of measures of this kind may be to destroy the Neapolitan tradition and inventiveness that has made the region's pizza the best known and most highly appreciated in the world, and that there will be repercussions in terms of employment given that at this point pizzas and breads produced by hand in the traditional way are at risk of disappearing from the market?
- Lastly, does the Commission not consider that it should present new legislation which, rather than penalising, would secure the legality and protect the specific characteristics of traditional quality products from all the Member States of the European Union?

