

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3187/00  
by Carlos Costa Neves (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Milk production in the Azores

1. As the Commission knows, milk production in Portugal exceeded the available milk quota by some 63 000 tonnes in the year 1999-2000, with the surplus occurring in the Azores autonomous region.
2. The Government of the autonomous region has systematically informed producers that there is no need to pay the supplementary charge provided for in EU legislation, and they are being led to believe that their 'reference quantities' correspond to the quantities of milk they produced in 1999-2000.
3. In August, the Portuguese Agriculture Ministry instructed milk buyers to abstain 'from charging any commission or demanding any reduction from the producers, until further notice'.
4. The Portuguese Agriculture Ministry stated on 6 September that 'the government is negotiating with Europe for 70 000 tonnes of milk to be exempted from penalties in the Azores', and that if the Commission did not yield on this point, the Government would initiate litigation proceedings, 'and instruct farmers not to pay the fines', which might then be paid, by the Portuguese state.
5. On the following day, a Commission spokesman explained that 'this is against Community law' and that 'there is no possibility' of increasing the quotas assigned to Portugal.
6. Given the contradictory claims set out above, the situation of paralysis and confusion in the Portuguese milk sector, and the need to find a positive solution, will the Commission clarify the matter as a matter of urgency?