

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1401/01
by Hervé Novelli (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Compulsory set-aside of 10% of land

Since 1992, arable land has been eligible for Community per-hectare aid under a scheme including set-aside measures.

This specific scheme was retained at the time of the most recent agreement in Berlin in 1999 on the new CAP reform.

The new regulation has thus continued the downward trend in the intervention price, for which farmers receive compensation at 50% in the form of area aid. This aid is still subject to a requirement to set aside a proportion of arable land – 10%, or more for producers who wish to do so, within limits set by the Member States (30% in France).

This new reform was intended to guarantee the equilibrium of the market, but the successive BSE and foot-and-mouth crises have shown the limits of the reform and have created a lasting imbalance in the marketing chain for cattle and sheep producers.

At the last European agriculture summit, in February 2000, at which no agreement was reached on reforming the beef and veal market, the Commission nevertheless accepted that the Member States could grant national aid to producers so as to compensate them for their losses due to the BSE crisis.

Do you not think it is time for the European Union to accept its responsibilities by proposing more flexible set-aside measures to enable producers either to harvest cereals produced on this land or to permit cattle or sheep to graze there?