

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0192/02
by Giuseppe Pisicchio (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Special aid for the Italian farming sector

An extremely alarming situation has been produced in central and southern Europe - particularly in Italy - by the harsh weather conditions which have occurred during what is proving to be a very long winter, with an unusual combination of drought and freezing temperatures.

For some autumn and winter crops which, in southern Italy in particular, are of leading importance, this situation has now turned into a real emergency.

According to the latest estimates, in Puglia (one of the areas which has been hardest hit) fruit and vegetable production has fallen by a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 60%, while the production of wheat and artichokes - which are leading crops in the area - has fallen by as much as 80%, making for a loss of at least € 100 million.

This drastic fall in production has led to consumer prices rising to totally unacceptable levels and is having such an alarming inflationary effect that the judicial authorities are looking into the matter.

Given the above, would the Commission not agree that it should provide special aid to farmers in view of the seriousness of the disaster which has occurred in major EU countries in a sector which, because of the specific nature of the activities involved, is exposed to weather-related risks for which current European legislation makes no provision whatsoever.