

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0525/02
by Gian Gobbo (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: The future of tobacco growing in Europe and in the Veneto

Tobacco has been grown in Europe since the seventeenth century. European tobacco is generally grown on small farms where farming is a family tradition handed down from father to son. Tobacco growing is often combined with the production of other crops or livestock rearing and helps maintain agricultural diversity, which is certainly the case in the Veneto region, and the province of Verona in particular.

Tobacco is grown by 130,000 producers in Europe who provide employment for around 500,000 workers, mainly in Italy, Greece, France and Spain.

The Commission recently proposed a regulation which would put an end to aid for European tobacco growers. Such a measure would lead to the disappearance of tobacco growing in Europe, greatly to the benefit of non-European producers, but would not have the slightest effect on cigarette consumption, as no European Union country plans to prohibit smoking.

Does the Commission agree that it would be appropriate to maintain the centuries-old practice of tobacco growing, both on social grounds and in order to maintain a balanced agricultural sector?

Does the Commission still regard as valid the principle of Community preference, the basis on which the Common Agricultural Policy was established and developed?