

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0217/03
by Giacomo Santini (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Commission Fischler's proposal on Community aid to farms

The proposals presented by Commissioner Fischler provide for a single annual lump-sum payment to each farm, based on the average Community aid paid to the farm during the previous three reference years 2000, 2001 and 2002. However, in Italy many farms, in particular in the beef sector, did not apply for aid during those three years for various reasons - lack of information, unattractive nature of the aid, bureaucratic complications, impossibility of using the bovine register as it did not exist or was incomplete. Statistically, Italy applies for approximately 1 300 000 slaughter premiums a year, compared with 4 500 000 eligible head of cattle. Even in more organised regions, such as Lombardy, only 70% of livestock farms apply for aid for at most 70% of the eligible head of cattle. Consequently, these producers would be denied any possibility of receiving aid for the duration of the validity of the new regulation. The regulation provides for derogations in the case of force majeure, i.e. cases in which the farms were unable to produce in the reference years or had a reduced production for reasons beyond their control. This rule does not appear to apply to the Italian producers concerned, given that they produced normally, were theoretically entitled to the aid and fulfilled all the necessary conditions but did not submit any application. However, it is clear that the producers did not know that by forgoing aid in a particular year they would be precluded from benefiting in the future, and indeed for ever, from the single payment provided for by the new system which uncouples aid from production.

What does the Commission intend to do to remedy this blatant injustice and to introduce special rules for these farms which nonetheless had an entitlement to aid?

Is there any possibility of resubmitting an application in 2003 in 2004 if the Regulation enters into force on 1 January 2005?

Is it possible to take as a basis the acquired right which can be shown to have existed in previous years and nonetheless establish a lump-sum amount based on factors that can be derived from the current farm data for hectares, head of cattle and calculable production?