

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1798/03
by Wolfgang Ilgenfritz (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Refunds for sugar-processing operations

In accordance with the Brussels Agreement (2002/C 152/05),¹ the firm Agrar Invest Tatschl imports sugar from Serbia and Croatia. Tatschl's customers use the sugar imported from Serbia or Croatia in the manufacture of juices, chocolate, etc. and then export the finished products to third countries.

The current intervention price for sugar is approximately euro 699 per tonne. The world market price, on the other hand, is only about euro 250. The sugar-processing operations should therefore receive a refund of approximately euro 450 per tonne for sugar imported for processing from Serbia and Croatia when the finished products (juices, chocolate) are subsequently exported to third countries (export of Non-Annex I products from the Union's customs-free territory with application for an export refund).

The refund in question works without any problem in Germany and Italy. I do not understand why Austrian sugar-processing operations have so far been placed at a disadvantage by the refusal to grant them refunds.

The Austrian Finance Ministry took action on this matter last year (28 March 2002) by sending a request to the Commission for clarification on whether Austrian firms were eligible for refunds in these circumstances. So far the Commission has not replied.

I would therefore like answers to the following questions:

1. Are refunds possible for Austrian sugar-processing operations?
2. If so, can refunds be retroactive?
3. What procedure must be gone through to obtain retroactive refunds?
4. If not, on the basis of which directives is a refund impossible?

¹ OJ C 152, 26.6.2002, p. 14.