

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2373/03
by Francesco Fiori (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Assessment of the COM in tobacco

Regulation (EC) No 1636/98¹ amended Article 26 of Regulation (EEC) No 2075/92² on the common organisation of the market in raw tobacco to read 'Before 1 April 2002, the Commission shall submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the functioning of the common organisation of the market in raw tobacco'. In February 2002 the Commission, by means of a tendering procedure, entrusted the company Cogea with the task of assessing the COM in tobacco and the contract, which should have come to an end by October 2002, is still in force. Cogea submitted a complete draft of the commissioned document, although not until December 2002.

Can the Commission say:

1. what the reasons are for the serious delay in forwarding the documents to Parliament compared with the deadline laid down and when it expects to submit the final document;
2. whether the Commission considers it has fulfilled the provisions of the regulation by sending its own document dated 8 November 2002 and, if so, why it requested a further study from an outside consultant, to which it attaches great importance;
3. what competence and experience Cogea has in the tobacco sector which led to its being awarded the contract, and what the contract itself was worth;
4. who is on the steering committee monitoring Cogea's work and whether it is true that the members include officials in DG-AGRI's Tobacco Unit since, according to the call to tender, their work too is being assessed; whether it is true that the committee, as well as checking that Cogea's work was proceeding in accordance with the deadline and specifications laid down, also requested significant amendments to the text, thereby reducing the external assessor's degree of autonomy;
5. furthermore, pending delivery of a copy of the final document and in view of the limited time available, whether it can forward to Parliament the internal documents of the steering committee and the Cogea draft, delivered in December 2002, and subsequent amendments?

¹ OJ L 210, 28.7.1998, p. 23.

² OJ L 215, 30.7.1992, p. 70.