

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0222/04  
by María Ayuso González (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Cotton

France has recently presented a 'European Cotton Initiative' in support of Africa's cotton-based economies, advocating the reform of the Community cotton industry subsidy arrangement, so as to reduce the allegedly market-distorting subsidies granted by the EU.

Does the Commission believe that the French Government's major interests in the African cotton sector via the French Company for Developing Textile Fibres, which has a large network of branches in Africa, might underpin the way in which the Community negotiators tolerated the belligerency of a group of African countries at the WTO ministerial meeting in Cancún, when those countries attacked the Community arrangements?

The problem of African cotton's inability to compete with cotton from elsewhere and with other textile fibres will not be resolved by the disappearance of the Community cotton industry. Does the Commission therefore believe that the interests of a single country justify launching a proposal to reform the sector which could put an end to the viability of EU cotton farming, given that, moreover, our cotton production represents merely 2% of world production, our exports 1.5% of world trade, we import cotton virtually duty free, and we do not grant export refunds?