

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0402/06  
by Czesław Siekierski (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Definition of vodka

On 15 December 2005 the Commission adopted a proposal for a regulation on the definition, description, presentation and labelling of spirituous beverages. Unfortunately, the existing definition of vodka was not amended, despite being inaccurate and out of date. The manufacture of vodka from ingredients other than those habitually used for centuries is therefore still allowed. As a result there is a danger that inferior products will appear on the market under the name of 'vodka', which may damage the fine reputation established by this product over hundreds of years.

Is the manufacture of vodka from ingredients other than cereals and potatoes of such importance in the European Union that it is not possible to stipulate that these are the only ingredients that may be used for its production?

How much vodka in the European Union is produced from cereals and potatoes and how much from other ingredients? It is essential to have this information before a definition of vodka can be established. However, the problem of formulating a definition of this product needs to be examined in greater depth, since vodka cannot merely be seen as an ordinary commercial product, but rather, when manufactured from cereals or potatoes, as a part of the cultural and regional wealth of Europe with a centuries-old tradition, in the same way as whisky, brandy or wine.

Why has vodka been classified as a category 'B' spirituous beverage, for which the addition of alcohol is generally permitted?

The manufacture of vodka does not include the addition of alcohol, which is obtained solely by blending ethyl alcohol 96% with water.