

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0826/06
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to the Commission

Subject: Criteria for biodiversity in the new programme on rural development 2007-2013

The European Community strategic guidelines on the development of rural areas (programming period of 2007-2013) refer to sustainability objectives, the maintenance of biodiversity and an increase in ecological production, and in particular to the Presidency's conclusions at the Göteborg European Council in 2001 in particular. Furthermore, the European Union has ratified the Biosafety Protocol and signed the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources (FAO) 2004.

Does the Commission share the view that expanding biodiversity must be an explicit aim of national strategies on rural development?

Does the Commission share the view that the Biosafety Protocol may also be a relevant point of reference for rural development support as part of an integrated strategy?

Does the Commission share the view that the precautionary principle of the Biodiversity Convention (1992) can in principle be considered a practical criterion in Axis 2 of rural development, e.g. for not using specific pesticides?

Does the Commission share the view that protection measures for maintaining biodiversity and traditional agricultural methods included in item 2 could be established as general conditions for support (e.g. obligatory maintenance of landscape features)?

Does the Commission share the view that measures for maintaining biodiversity do not distort competition as laid down in EU competition law?

Does the Commission share the view that the voluntary participation of farmers in programmes for maintaining and increasing biodiversity is in line with WTO rules?

Does the Commission share the view that measures to maintain or increase biodiversity represent obligations under multilateral agreements on the environment, which are not covered by WTO rules?