

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3734/07
by Béatrice Patrie (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Hectare premium for chestnut production

Chestnut production varies between 10 000 and 13 000 tonnes in France. Predominantly the produce of traditional chestnut groves, it is an important heritage, with a strong identity of its own, and is an important economic factor for agriculture in difficult and disadvantaged regions in south-eastern and south-western France.

Chestnut growing is essential to the maintenance of rural areas and environmental protection through the preservation of open forests, avoiding the spread of fires and sloping soil erosion.

It provides a very large number of family farms with a livelihood and plays a social role in rural municipalities.

Over the last few years, there has been increasingly strong external competition from such countries as China and Turkey, in terms of both prices and volumes.

This competition from low-production-cost countries is having a major destabilising effect on the European market and producers' incomes.

Chestnut growing is steadily diminishing owing to the disappearance of family farms.

Many farmers are discouraged by the unprofitable nature of the sector and the amount of time required to start up production.

These were the reasons for granting aid to nut growers under Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003¹. These provisions are important to the survival of such produce, but do not cover chestnuts.

Chestnut growers are now asking for their sector to be covered by these provisions.

Will the Commission make a proposal to the Council and Parliament to this end?

¹ OJ L 270, 21.10.2003, p. 1.