

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0853/09
by Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Quota for Alaska pollack (*Theragra chalcogramma*)

Owing to the heavy restrictions on cod fishing (stemming from the management and recovery plans that have been introduced) and the consequent substantial rise in the market price for this species, the Portuguese cod-processing sector has suffered severe disruption.

The market for cod in Portugal represents consumption amounting to around 58 000 tonnes (dry weight), corresponding to an annual trade volume of over EUR 500 million. The retraction in the market has forced the cod-processing industry to seek alternatives. In Portugal, the rise in price for cod has led to growing demand for similar species, in particular Alaska pollack (*Theragra chalcogramma*), as shown by the increase in annual imports of this species as a raw material: 792, 1 896 and 5 310 tonnes in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively.

In the period 2004-2006, this frozen product (without head and entrails) had a quota of 10 000 tonnes per year at zero duty, which enabled the cod-processing industry to circumvent the problems posed by escalating prices for cod. In terms of price, pollack was seen as a good alternative that would make it possible to meet demand, maintaining levels of capacity use in the Portuguese salting and drying industry.

Strangely, Regulation (EC) No 824/2007¹ was subsequently published without any quota for this species (*Theragra chalcogramma*), which has badly damaged the cod-processing industry in Portugal.

Penalising access to this product in this way is already having serious consequences for the industry. The absence of a quota for Alaska pollack is increasingly detracting from the value of this product, with the burden amounting to more than 15% of its final price.

Is the Commission looking into the possibility of restoring the conditions for access to this raw material that applied in the period 2004-2006, i.e. a quota of 10 000 tonnes per year at zero duty?

¹ OJ L 184, 14.7.2007, p. 1.