

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3316/09  
by Klaus Hänsch (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: EU accession negotiations with Croatia

In recent years, a worrying trend has arisen in Croatia: in preparation for the country's impending accession to the EU, large investors are clearing vast areas of new land for production of wine and olives on an industrial scale. After Croatia's accession, the wine and olive oil produced from this land will enter the European internal market, which is already suffering from overproduction of these products, and will be subsidised.

The clearing of large areas is also causing substantial ecological damage. Large areas of Croatia are characterised by karst landscape, with a thin layer of humus overlying limestone. Hitherto, only the coastal plain has therefore been exploited [significantly] for agriculture. In the mountains, on the other hand, farming has been small-scale and confined to the valleys where enough soil had collected over the limestone stratum. In the rest of the country, mixed forest with much undergrowth has become established, protecting the scant humus against the heavy downpours which occur in Croatia and preventing landslides. This forest is now being cleared on a large scale.

Is this problem being taken into account in the accession negotiations with Croatia?