

**Question for written answer P-008138/2013  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D)**

Subject: Vertical market demarcation

It appears from the European Commission's Green Paper on unfair trading practices in the business-to-business food and non-food supply chain in Europe that these sectors are faced with various unfair trading practices, and there are often large price differences for identical food products between different Member States. For example, according to a recent study by Belgium's Federal Public Service for the Economy, prices for end users in Belgium are 7% higher than in France, 10.4% higher than in the Netherlands and 10.6% higher than in Germany. The European consumer is thus confronted with a deeply fragmented internal market. According to the Green Paper, 58% of Europeans also consider that the existing enforcement mechanisms for protecting weaker parties are insufficient.

1. Is the Commission, and in particular the Commissioner for competition, aware of these price differences for the same food products in different Member States? To what extent does the Commission consider these differences to be due to the existence of vertical agreements that demarcate the European market on a country-by-country basis and prevent parallel trade, thus violating the principles of an internal market?
2. The lack of enforcement is problematic. A task force on food was recently set up within the Directorate-General for Competition. What are the priorities for this task force? Is the vertical demarcation of the market in the food sector a priority? If so, what measures will the Commission take and when does it expect to achieve concrete results? If the vertical demarcation of the market in the food sector is not a priority for this task force, why not? How and where does the Commission think that this issue should be tackled?