

**Question for written answer P-000338/2016
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Paavo Väyrynen (ALDE)

Subject: Direct sales of reindeer meat

Finland has a national derogation from EU legislation under which, in areas where reindeer are farmed, reindeer owners may sell reindeer meat, including dried reindeer meat, directly to consumers without the meat's being inspected. The derogation was obtained from the Commission and the other Member States under Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption. The new EU regulation on such controls which is currently being drafted would revoke this Regulation.

It is important that Finland's national derogation relating to reindeer should not be abolished by the new regulation. Article 142 of the proposal for a regulation on controls should be expanded to include either the clause proposed by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry concerning continuation of the derogation ('However, the national adaptations granted in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 17 (3–7) of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 will remain in force') or some other unambiguous guarantee that the national derogation is to remain in force after Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 has been revoked.

Continuation of the direct sale of reindeer meat (without inspection) is very important to local people in remote, sparsely populated reindeer-farming areas. It is important in order to preserve a traditional method of sale of reindeer meat. In reindeer-farming areas, distances are long, so that it is not economically viable to transport small numbers of animals to reindeer slaughterhouses. Moreover, consumers wish reindeer meat to be sold directly, as this is buying local par excellence.

It is pointless for the EU to alter the status of direct sales, as neither Finnish reindeer meat nor Finnish dried reindeer meat has ever caused any health problems. Interfering with direct sales would weaken the functioning of the reindeer meat market. Direct sales support very free price competition. The continuation of direct sales in the form which has applied hitherto is also very important to Saami people, the only indigenous people in the European Union.

Is the Commission aware of these problems which could be caused by the termination of direct sales of reindeer meat, and will it maintain the derogation for direct sales of Finnish reindeer meat?