

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0789/04

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to the Commission

Subject: International wine piracy - amendment of Regulation (EC) No 753/2002

On 10 February 2004, the Management Committee for Wines reconfirmed, by a narrow majority, the vote of 24 January 2004 approving an opinion on amendments to Regulation (EC) No 753/2002¹ and, more specifically, to the chapter on the description, designation, presentation and protection of certain products. This opinion was recently approved by the Commission and published in Official Journal L 55 of 24 February 2004. The new rules will apply from 15 March 2004.

Commission Regulation (EC) No 316/2004² amending Regulation (EC) No 753/2002, among other things, relaxes the rules on the international use of 17 traditional Italian wine terms, which can be used, from 15 March 2004, for wines produced in non-Community countries, provided that it is shown under set criteria that the term had been used in the past.

It will no longer be necessary, however, for the same term to be recognised or protected in a national legislative framework, as required by the previous rules. The result of the decision is a free-for-all, or at least making it easier to market wine not produced in Italy internationally using traditional Italian terms.

In view of the above, does the Commission agree that:

- the proposed new rules conflict with European legislation on labelling and consumer protection;
- the term used on a wine label should indicate the characterisation, ageing, quality and colour of the wine obtained by specific production methods in a geographical area inextricably linked with the history and the culture of the wine described by the label;
- the amendments to Regulation (EC) No 753/2002 contained in Regulation (EC) No 316/2004 contradict the objective of combating food piracy, which is a fundamental part of the WTO agreement to guarantee fair trade and to protect traditional production from international counterfeiting, to the benefit of local development in all countries;
- in terms of the protection of typical food products threatened with imitation, strict legislation constitutes a choice for market transparency, increasing consumer protection, and also has a significant impact on Europe in terms of jobs and the economy;
- the proposed new rules make it considerably easier to commit international wine piracy?

¹ OJ L 118, 4.5.2002, p. 1.

² OJ L 55, 24.2.2004, p. 16.