

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3531/09

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to the Commission

Subject: Closure of the Pratovecchio (Ar) plant by the Swedish multinational SCA and breach of market rules

SCA is a Swedish consumables and paper multinational, with an annual turnover of approximately EUR 11.5 billion and 52 000 employees in 40 countries. The company has adopted a code of ethics.

In Italy it has 2 200 employees, 1 060 of which work in seven plants in Tuscany.

The Pratovecchio plant, in Arezzo province, started production in 1962 as Ausonia, before being purchased in 2001 by SCA Hygiene Products, a business unit of the SCA Group.

The 40 000 square-metre plant is equipped with a paper mill and nine production lines, manned by 128 permanent employees and 14 temporary employees. The plant targets the Italian market.

In 2008, finished product manufacturing for the private labels of major Italian distribution chains totalled 27 000 tonnes, with a turnover of EUR 50 million. This equated to 64% of SCA Italia's production value.

The plant is noted for its environmental friendliness, thanks to bold decisions on technology such as the creation of a closed-loop paper mill, the installation of a heat and power plant and the number of product, process and environmental certifications it holds.

Output in 2009 was expected to reach 29 000 tonnes, partly thanks to innovative trade union agreements on flexible working hours and task flexibility, but, all of a sudden, on 27 March 2009, SCA announced the plant's closure and launched a mass redundancy procedure for all employees on the grounds of cessation of business.

SCA is preventing the sale of the plant, not allowing other entrepreneurs to invest in a top-quality manufacturing site.

Commission Decision 2002/156/EC¹ of 31 January 2001 declared a merger between SCA and Metsa Tissue to be incompatible with the common market. In view of this decision, and the reasoning behind it (point 256 in particular), does the Commission not feel that the rules of the single market have also been breached by the mere fact that a competitor entered the market to buy up a top-quality company in order to do away with it?

Does the Commission not feel that in this specific case the right to free competition has been violated?

¹ OJ L 57, 27.2.2002. p. 1.