

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3628/09  
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to the Commission

Subject: Photovoltaic and biomass power plants and wind farms in Salento planned without an SEIA taking account of their cumulative impact in conjunction with emissions from the Salentino power plant

Brindisi has a 4450 mw power plant, the largest and most polluting in Europe, which burns around 8 million tonnes of coal a year. Its emissions include 19.532833 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is twice the Kyoto objective emission level, IPA, particulates, heavy metals, sulphur and nitrogen oxides and radioactive substances.

In addition to these emissions, Salento is also affected by dioxins emitted by the ILVA steel plant in Taranto, and consequently mobility and mortality rates caused by neoplasms are higher than the national average in the province of Lecce.

Encouraged by public subsidies for alternative energy and the liberalisation of the market, and helped by permissive legislation, a very large number of facilities for the production and sale of energy have been planned, including dozens of plants using biomass in the form of imported vegetable oil and others using local biomass sources. Twelve such projects in the province of Lecce alone, fuelled by oil from monoculture plantations in Asia and Africa, have a combined capacity of 300 mw.

The many medium and large-scale photovoltaic projects range from plant with a capacity of up to 1 mw on agricultural land to huge photovoltaic power plants occupying up to 1.5 km<sup>2</sup>. In the province of Lecce, 45 very large photovoltaic facilities and 46 wind farms are waiting for regional authorisation. These will occupy enormous tracts of land, rendering it unavailable for agriculture and devastating the landscape in an area which is one of the least wooded in Italy.

The plants are located without any concern for land use planning, thus violating provincial energy plans and leading to contentious proceedings at the Bari Regional Administrative Court in February 2009. Each individual first-generation biomass installation with a capacity of 100 tonnes or over, as referred to in Annex II of Directive 97/11/EC<sup>1</sup>, should be considered on a case-by-case basis for environmental impact assessment, a requirement which is systematically circumvented. The projects as a whole constitute a single energy plan and so should be subject to a strategic environmental impact assessment in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>2</sup>.

In COM(2005)0628, the Commission has already expressed reservations about the use of first generation biomass other than that derived from waste and by-products from the agro-food industry in view of the deforestation caused by planting biofuel crops, increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and threats to biodiversity and crops in the third world.

In view of the foregoing,

Does the Commission agree that it should request the regional authorities to review all the authorisations in question and call for strategic environmental impact assessments of wind farms and photovoltaic power production plants under Directive 2001/42/EC to take account of their cumulative impact on increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, climate change, public health and environmental sustainability?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 73, 14.3.1997, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 197, 21.7.2001, p. 30.