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ORAL QUESTION (O-97/77)

with debate, pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

by Mr W. MÜLLER, Mr DONDELINGER, Mr EVANS, Mr MITCHELL and Lord MURRAY of GRAVESEND

to the Commission of the European Communities

Subject: Direct sales of agricultural products

Observations of the price of agricultural products at consumer and producer level show that in the last few years the agricultural component in the final price to the consumer has been declining. On the other hand, as ultimate consumer prices in all Community Member States have been rising sharply, one can only conclude that marketing and processing industry margins have - for whatever reasons - increased disproportionately.

On this assumption, it is clear that it is in the common interest of agriculture and the consumer to aim at direct sales i.e. to eliminate intermediate undertakings as much as possible.

However, market observations show that direct sales are on the decline and the two marketing channels: (1) farmer - wholesaler - retailer - ultimate consumer and (2) farmer - wholesaler - processing

undertaking are predominant. The attendant concentrations in the marketing and processing sector are weakening the market position of agriculture. In view of these developments, the Commission is asked the following questions:

1. To the best of its knowledge, how important are direct sales of agricultural products today ? By direct sales are meant sales both to the ultimate consumer and to the intermediate consumer (processing undertaking).
2. Can it indicate the percentage of direct sales in the total sales of agricultural products by country and region and by product and product groups ?
3. Is there any evidence that in those regions of the Community where agricultural incomes are particularly high, direct sales of agricultural products play a more important role than elsewhere ?
4. Does the Commission consider it necessary and possible within the framework of its agricultural structural policy to create conditions for the promotion and expansion of direct sales in agriculture ?