Commission requests Italy to recover surplus levies due from Italian milk producers

Today, the European Commission has called on Italy to take action to address shortcomings in the recovery of surplus levies due from dairy producers who exceeded their individual quotas in years when Italy overran its national dairy quota.

In spite of repeated and numerous requests from the Commission, the majority of levies due between 1995 and 2009 has still not been recovered by Italian authorities, who have manifestly not taken the appropriate measures to effectively recover the total estimated amount of at least €1.42 billion from producers. This amount needs to be reimbursed to the Italian budget, so that the Italian taxpayers do not lose out, the Commission has underlined today.

The failure to ensure the effective recovery of these levies undermines the efforts undertaken at European level to stabilize the market of dairy products. In addition, it creates distortions of competition with other European and Italian producers who respected the production quotas or paid the surplus levies in case of overrun.

Background
A quota system was introduced in the dairy sector in 1984 to address chronic overproduction on the dairy market and the related increase in intervention costs. The system was essentially based on national production quotas allocated to Member States and divided between national dairies and/or individual producers. When a Member State exceeds its quota, a surplus levy has to be paid by the dairies and/or individual producers who have exceeded their individual quota.

Today’s request takes the form of a letter of formal notice. Italy has two months to submit its observations (if any). After examining these, the Commission may request Italy to take action to ensure its compliance with the quota system in a given period of time ("reasoned opinion").

For more information:
On the June infringement package decisions, see MEMO/13/583
On the general infringement procedure, see MEMO/12/12
For more information on infringement procedures:
http://ec.europa.eu/eu_law/infringements/infringements_en.htm
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