

Denmark**Pesticides Ban Upheld**

The Danish Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and former European Commissioner for Environment, Ritt Bjerregaard, declared again on 13 June that her plan to ban the use of pesticides in fruit and vegetable growing would be upheld, despite this being a breach of European Union regulations. This new refusal came during a meeting on agricultural questions between the European Commission and the Danish Parliament and following repeated warnings on the result of her action.

The ban will mean the end of a considerable number of fruit and vegetable imports, especially from countries in the South of the European Union, and will be interpreted as a trade restriction breaking internal market regulations.

The Minister stated that she had confidence in the assessments made by her top civil servants who believed that Denmark had the right to take such a stand given that

it will be voting in 2003 for a general ban on certain kinds of pesticides, due to their health implications.

Denmark's action is a result of its stated impatience with the slow pace of the EU system. According to estimates, the toxicity identification and analysis operations set up in 1993 to examine approximately 850 different kinds of pesticides will not be concluded until 2003.

Although only 150 pesticides have so far been analysed by the EU as not dangerous, the Danish government believes that authorities in the EU still continue to authorise other pesticides despite there being no proof of the levels of toxicity they contain. They fear that the European Union will not respect the 2003 deadline and hundreds of different kinds of pesticides that have not been properly assessed will be used throughout EU Member States. (MJ)

