

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002554/25
to the Commission
Galato Alexandraki (ECR)
(25 June 2025)

Subject: EUR 415 million fine for OPEKEPE's administrative failures: who ultimately pays the price?

The European Commission has fined Greece EUR 415 million for systematic administrative failures in the management of agricultural aid in the period 2009-2023. As the Ministry of Rural Development itself acknowledges, this is not a matter of producer fraud, but rather the result of inadequate checks, a lack of cross-checks with the IAPR, shortcomings in the land register, pasture maps, technical errors by private individuals and numerous years of institutional inaction.

Although the blame is being attributed to administrative or political persons, not a single charge has been initiated. Meanwhile, the fine is already set to be covered by the state budget. This means that ordinary taxpayers and honest farmers are bearing the consequences of scandals in which they had no part.

In view of this, can the Commission say:

1. How does it assess the failure of the Greek authorities to identify and punish those actually responsible?
2. Does it intend to request specific names of natural or legal persons responsible for the infringements?
3. Does it consider it fair to impose the fine on farmers and citizens who bear no responsibility for the management collapse of the competent bodies?

Submitted: 25.6.2025

Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(5 August 2025)

The role of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) under shared management for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is to perform systems audits to obtain assurance on the proper functioning of the national governance systems, which protect the Union financial interests, and to work closely with the national administrations to remedy any possible shortcoming identified.

Where shortcomings are detected, DG AGRI also protects the EU financial interest through the application of financial corrections against the Member State concerned by reclaiming the amounts of EU funds unduly spent.

DG AGRI does not instigate proceedings against individuals in the context of its mandate under the CAP framework. Alleged wrongdoings of individuals fall under the competence of the European Public Prosecutor's Office which is conducting an investigation ⁽¹⁾.

The Paying Agencies (PA) accredited by the Competent Authority in each Member State are responsible to collect amounts unduly paid to the beneficiaries and to recredit those to the European Union Funds. The capacity of the PA to fulfil this responsibility is one of the accreditation criteria ⁽²⁾.

Financial corrections, as the one mentioned by the Honourable Member, applied by the Commission for deficiencies in the national control systems, are not fines but, as mentioned above, cover the amounts of EU funds which have been unduly spent.

These exclusions from Union financing are always addressed to the Member State and deducted from the periodical declarations of expenditure of the Member State concerned under the CAP.

It is then for the national authorities to instigate recoveries towards individual beneficiaries in case these have committed irregularities.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.eppo.europa.eu/en/media/news/greece-eppo-probes-opekepe-officials-over-alleged-organised-agricultural-subsidy-fraud>.

⁽²⁾ Point 2 (f) of Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2022/127, Control activities, procedures for debts.