

Rise in Greek agro exports cited by Agricultural development minister at ANUGA 2005

ATHENS, 10/10/2005 (ANA)

Agricultural development and food minister Evangelos Bassiakos on Sunday said that Greek agricultural exports rose by 21 percent in the first five months of the year, as he inaugurated the Greek pavilion at ANUGA 2005, the world's largest international trade fair in the foods, drinks and equipment sector, held in the German city of Cologne.

The fair, running from October 8 to 12, is held every two years. The previous fair in 2003 attracted some 3,300 exhibitors from Europe, 540 from the US and 760 from Asia, as well as 6,000 suppliers from all over the world and 161,000 visitors from 157 countries.

Bassiakos said that the participation of Greek enterprises and agencies in the respected Anuga trade show contributed to the projection and promotion of Greek quality agricultural products to a wide public of consumers and merchants.

He said the Greek government's basic goal was the country's efficient and beneficial adaptation to the new conditions and developments of the EU's new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which enters into effect in 2006, at which time subsidies will no longer be linked to volume of production but will be paid on the basis of the farmers' history of receipts data, while the price of agricultural products will be set exclusively on the basis of their commercial price.

"Thus, we are turning towards competitive products that are produced because there is demand for them on the market," Bassiakos said, noting that Greece had the necessary natural resources and appropriate climatic conditions, and consequently a substantial comparative advantage in many high-quality and high added value agricultural products, in which it could specialize.

Bassiakos further said that products of the Greek and Mediterranean healthy diet were also being promoted, given the

corresponding consumption rise, mainly in the developed countries.

"The first results of this collective effort of the government and the agencies has proven to be quite positive, given that in the first five months of 2005 we had a 21 percent increase in exports of agricultural products, while imports during the corresponding period fell by 4.7 percent, for the first time in a long time," the minister added.