

Commissioner Kyprianou visits Nigeria

Markos Kyprianou, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, will visit Nigeria from 1-4 March, in what will be his first trip to Africa as European Commissioner. During his time there, he will meet with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, Health Minister Eytayo Lambo, Agriculture and Rural Development Minister Alhaji Adamu Bello, and Minister for Information and National Orientation Chukwuemeka Chikelu, amongst others. Avian influenza will be high on the agenda during the Commissioner's visit, in view of the current outbreaks of the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus in birds and poultry in Nigeria. Mr Kyprianou will receive an update on the avian influenza situation from the national authorities and discuss ways in which the EU could assist the Nigerians in their efforts to tackle the disease. The Commissioner will also take the opportunity, while in Nigeria, to meet with Mohamad Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Commissioner Kyprianou said, "I am very glad to have the opportunity to visit Nigeria and discuss first hand the avian influenza situation there. The Commission is very concerned about the impact that avian influenza could have on developing countries where people often live in close proximity with poultry and rely on poultry for their subsistence. In addition, as the spring migratory season approaches, many birds will be returning from Africa to their summer nesting grounds in or via Europe. We cannot predict what this will mean for the EU in terms of avian influenza outbreaks. What we can do is support and help countries which are battling against this disease in their flocks, while continuously looking to strengthen the EU's own defences against this virulent virus." The Commissioner is also planning to visit Egypt on 25-26 March