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E.C. COMMISSIONER DE CLERCQ SAYS COMMUNITY WILL
IMMEDIATELY COUNTER AMERICAN PASTA TARIFFS

The European Community will take countermeasures in response to the U.S. decision to raise duties on E.C. pasta products, Willy De Clercq, E.C. Commissioner for External Relations, said today in Brussels.

The U.S. action arose from a dispute over the Community's preferential treatment of citrus imports from certain Mediterranean countries. Mr. De Clercq said the E.C. Commission would immediately propose retaliatory action to the E.C. Council of Ministers.

The text of Mr. De Clercq's statement follows:

I am deeply disappointed by the decision taken by President Reagan to impose heavy duties on imports of pasta from the Community as a reaction to the preferential treatment for citrus that the Community grants to its partners from the Mediterranean basin.

This measure does not have a legal basis and is contrary to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) rules and to the agreement concluded between the Community and the U.S. in 1973 (the Casey-Soames agreement). It undermines the credibility of American declarations in favor of strengthening the multilateral trading system. As announced yesterday by the Council of Ministers, the Community has no choice but to immediately take retaliatory actions, which the Commission will propose at once to the Council.

I particularly regret the American decision because it does not take into account the arguments put forward by the Commission, and repeated yesterday by the Council, defending our arrangements. The only aim of these arrangements is to contribute to the development of these Mediterranean countries, and not to promote any economic benefit for the Community.

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I sincerely hope that the U.S. authorities will reconsider their decision, thereby making retaliation by the Community unnecessary, and preventing another source of trade tension between the Community and the U.S.