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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis
on behalf of the European Commission
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All EU's recent free trade agreements (FTAs) include dedicated chapters on trade and sustainable development, requiring compliance with a range of international environmental and social standards. Furthermore, all imports must comply with EU's health and safety requirements, the same that are applied to domestic producers. The latest FTAs also have a chapter on sustainable food systems promoting cooperation on matters such as the reduction in the use of pesticides, or the fight against antimicrobial resistance.

In some of the recently concluded agreements, the EU has negotiated some tariff conditionalities, which link a preferential tariff treatment for a given product with the compliance by EU's trade partners with high sustainability production standards for that product. Such a clause was negotiated with the Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur) for eggs, where tariff liberalisation is conditional onto the compliance of imported eggs with a Directive on the animal welfare of laying hens¹, and with New Zealand, where the access to the tariff rate quota for beef is only granted to grass-fed livestock. The EU intends to pursue this approach in future FTAs, as long as accepted by its trade partners.

In addition, the EU adopted several ambitious autonomous measures where certain process and productions standards also apply to imported products².

In parallel, the EU continues its efforts to get third countries on board with sustainability goals through international cooperation and technical assistance. This is why the EU engages in the World Trade Organization and other international fora to promote internationally agreed sustainability standards and uses its trade agreements as platforms for cooperation.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A01999L0074-20191214>

² Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Application of EU health and environmental standards to imported agricultural and agri-food products, COM(2022) 226 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0226>