

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001960/24
to the Commission
Konstantinos Arvanitis (The Left)
(4 October 2024)**

Subject: Issues in the control systems of the Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food in the sectors of food safety, farming, livestock production, veterinary issues and fisheries

According to the DG SANTE horizontal inspection (as described in the document on the subject with Ref. 2023-7655 General Follow Up Audit) ⁽¹⁾, there appear to be serious issues in the control system implemented by the Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food in the sectors of farming, livestock production, veterinary issues and fisheries.

The above-mentioned document highlights distortions, shortcomings and structural problems, in particular the fragmentation, overlapping responsibilities and understaffing of the control mechanisms, the absence of a single, coherent and simplified control framework, the ensuing lack of coordination and supervision and the risk-shy approach to imposing effective sanctions and administrative measures. The corresponding deficiencies have made for a landscape of arbitrariness and impunity.

It goes without saying that the above factors jeopardise consumer protection, because of gaps in ensuring the import, production and distribution of safe food, and shortcomings in the certification of suitability, quality checks and the improvement of food quality.

The EU and its Member States have an obligation to protect consumers and ensure they are not misled as to the safety, composition, labelling and price of food. In view of this:

1. Has the Commission received a reply from the relevant Ministry and has it been informed of any compliance measures taken to date?
2. What steps will it take to ensure that these distortions are remedied?

Submitted: 4.10.2024

**Answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission
(21 November 2024)**

The national official control systems should ensure a high level of safety. Member States have a primary responsibility to monitor the application of the relevant legal provisions and to take the necessary steps for enforcement.

In its role as guardian of the Treaties, the Commission carries out controls aimed at monitoring the implementation and enforcement of EU legislation on food and feed safety, animal health, animal welfare and plant health and may decide to take appropriate action.

The Member States are requested to present action plans on how they intend to address any shortcomings revealed during the inspections and audits.

Verification of the completion and effectiveness of corrective actions is an integral part of the audit cycle, and the Member States are revisited regularly to monitor progress in relation to the issues.

The Commission remains in contact with the Hellenic authorities on their progress made. The Hellenic authorities informed the Commission on further updates regarding some of the open recommendations.

The Commission carried out six audits on the official control systems in Greece during 2024 and has planned a further three audits to be carried out in 2025 ⁽¹⁾.

The horizontal issues are assessed in the context of some of these audits. The Commission might also consider any safeguard measures or infringement procedures if necessary.

¹ As stated in the Ministry's document (Ref. No: 39/90413 — 28/03/2024)
⁽¹⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/country/profile/details/GR>