

EN

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Answer given by Mr Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
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The EU is the world's largest exporter of agri-food products, with a trade surplus of EUR 70 billion in 2023. This is also thanks to its network of trade agreements. Mercosur is a large and highly protected market with great potential for high quality European agri-food exports such as some dairy products, processed foods, olive oil, malt, some fruits, wines, spirits and non-alcoholic beverages.

Regarding sensitive EU agricultural products, such as beef and poultry, the EU has negotiated limited concessions in the form of tariff rate quotas that represent a small fraction of EU consumption. These partial openings will be introduced in gradual stages to allow for a smooth transition. They will be coupled with safeguard clauses to protect the EU market in case imports from Mercosur would cause serious injury.

As regards standards, the EU has negotiated legally binding chapters on trade and sustainable development in all recent comprehensive trade agreements to ensure EU trading partners implement strong labour and environmental commitments. In addition, the EU Deforestation Regulation¹ requires that certain commodities to be placed on the EU market must originate from non-deforested areas.

Finally, as regards health and safety the EU's sanitary and phytosanitary standards are non-negotiable and are not affected by this or any other trade agreement. The decisions that the EU takes to protect its production and its consumers are underpinned by risk assessments, which are performed by the European Food Safety Authority. Imported products must always comply with the EU's stringent food safety requirements regardless of the existence of a trade agreement with the exporting country.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023R1115>