

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002296/24
to the Commission**

Anna Maria Cisint (Pfe), Susanna Ceccardi (Pfe), Silvia Sardone (Pfe), Roberto Vannacci (Pfe)
(29 October 2024)

Subject: Call for urgent measures to tackle food imports from China, a form of unfair competition that is detrimental to EU Member States

The US and the UK's decision to block tomato purée imports from Xinjiang over reports of human rights abuses against agricultural workers has recently made headlines. This issue had previously been raised in Italy — Europe's leading tomato producer and exporter — where producers had also called for such a ban.

We must prevent Chinese tomato producers — who have doubled their output from 6 to 11 million tonnes in only two years — from competing on the single market either by banning their products or by imposing heavy duties on them, given that they are cheaper because they do not have to comply with EU regulations.

In addition to threatening the survival of the many European companies that are an example of excellence in terms of quality and the preservation of tradition, these Chinese foodstuffs could also contain extremely harmful substances because they are made using chemically-synthesised products that are illegal in the EU.

In the light of the above:

1 Is the Commission aware of the above state of affairs?

2 Is it planning to tackle competition from Chinese food companies, particularly those producing tomatoes and derivatives thereof, by means either of import bans or of duties of at least 60%?

Submitted: 29.10.2024

Answer given by Mr Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(6 January 2025)

The Commission follows with concern the publication of extensive evidence-based reports (including from United Nations experts) regarding the use of forced labour in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The EU has repeatedly voiced such concern in bilateral meetings with the Chinese authorities and in multilateral fora.

The Forced Labour Regulation⁽¹⁾, adopted on 19 November and to apply three years after entry into force, lays down rules prohibiting operators to place on the EU market products made with forced labour.

Bans will be imposed in a non-discriminatory way on all products made with forced labour irrespective of their origin in the EU or a third country, based on objective criteria and on verifiable information gathered during investigations on the specific products.

Regarding the concern on harmful substances, all goods imported into the EU must comply with the robust EU health and product safety requirements, which are in place to assure a high level of food safety and animal and plant health within the EU.

In 2023 and 2024 there were no notifications in the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed concerning tomato products from China.

The Commission is committed to maintaining the functioning of the EU internal market by securing a level playing field and fair competition for the EU industry.

Industry has the possibility of lodging a complaint requesting the Commission to initiate an anti-dumping and/or anti-subsidy investigation against Chinese imports.

After conducting evidence-based investigation the Commission could propose imposition of additional duties on the concerned products.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/11/19/products-made-with-forced-labour-council-adopts-ban/>