

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002553/24
to the Commission
Mireia Borrás Pabón (Pfe)
(15 November 2024)**

Subject: Checking wine imported from third countries

The European Union has banned the use of a number of substances as plant-protection products. These include sodium arsenite, which is used to treat various vine diseases and is thus present in wine from many third countries.

The European Union does however permit the import from third countries of wine from arsenic-treated vines. Regulation (EU) 2023/915 on maximum limits for certain contaminants in foodstuffs considers this to pose a serious health risk in Europe, as there is extensive literature showing it is carcinogenic for humans. All imported products thus need to be scrupulously inspected rather than merely regulated on paper.

In view of this:

1. Does the Commission intend to table amendments to EU legislation to tighten up checks and restrictions on products imported into the EU?
2. What meaningful checks will the Commission impose on imported products, given that most trade agreements, such as that between the EU and MERCOSUR, do not even provide for mirror clauses?

Submitted: 15.11.2024

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(24 March 2025)**

Food safety for European consumers is a top priority for the Commission. Food products placed on the EU market must comply with very stringent standards. This applies equally to goods imported or produced in the EU.

The use of the active substance sodium arsenite has never been approved in the EU. According to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 ⁽¹⁾, the maximum residue levels (MRLs) for this substance are set at 0.01 mg/kg (the lowest level that can be measured by analytical laboratories) for all food and feed products, including wine.

Wine containing measurable levels of sodium arsenite cannot be imported into the EU. These levels remain unaltered regardless of trade agreements concluded by the EU.

According to Regulation (EU) 2017/625 ⁽²⁾ Member States must carry out official controls and enforcement activities at all stages of production, including at the import stage, to ensure that only products in compliance with the applicable legislation are placed on the market.

However, the Commission recognises the importance of continuous improvement in monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. In response to evolving risks and challenges, the Commission is committed to enhancing the rigor of its audits and checks, working closely with Member States to ensure a robust enforcement framework.

Where food of non-animal origin from third countries poses a contamination risk, the Commission may take measures through Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793 ⁽³⁾ which may include checks at border control posts at harmonised frequencies.

Although wine from third countries is currently not subject to such measures, the Commission remains vigilant and ready to intensify oversight and adapt its strategies to ensure the highest level of consumer safety.

⁽¹⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2005/396/oj>

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/625/oj>

⁽³⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/1793/oj