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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera
on behalf of the European Commission
(7.3.2025)

The Commission is well aware of the cost-of-living crisis and is actively enforcing competition rules in the food sector, focusing on practices that can inflate prices. It has addressed parallel trade restrictions for many products (biscuits, chocolate, coffee and beer) in the internal market¹, imposing fines on the undertakings. It is investigating cartels in the salmon market² and possible anticompetitive agreements in food delivery markets³, and alleged abusive practices in the energy drinks sector⁴. The Commission has also investigated retailers to verify that retail alliances are such that they enable retailers to reduce prices for consumers while maintaining competition between them⁵.

In parallel, the Commission launched a fact-finding exercise with the Member States in the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce, to map the occurrence of restrictions that prevent retailers from sourcing freely within the internal market (territorial supply constraints⁶)⁷. The findings may suggest that additional measures are needed to tackle price raising practices.

The Commission acknowledges calls for a new horizontal competition tool at EU level. The question is whether there are areas that a new competition tool could usefully address, which the current EU tools cannot. In 2023, two new competition-related instruments entered into force: the Digital Markets Act⁸ and the Foreign Subsidies Regulation⁹. As mentioned above, the Commission is currently enforcing the existing toolkit vigorously: it is carefully monitoring the food sector.

¹ https://competition-cases.ec.europa.eu/cases/AT_40632 regarding Mondelez), and https://competition-cases.ec.europa.eu/cases/AT_40134 (regarding AB InBev).

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_405

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_3908

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1802

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/mex_23_3847

⁶ Territorial supply constraints were addressed in the so-called Letta report, p. 113-114, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/smet/index_en.htm

⁸ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_6423. Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828, OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1–66.

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_129. Regulation (EU) 2022/2560 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, OJ L 330, 23.12.2022.