

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001501/25
to the Commission**

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(11 April 2025)

Subject: Foot-and-mouth disease — urgent action to protect the Italian livestock industry

The spread of foot-and-mouth disease in Slovakia and Hungary, with some cases even being reported on the border with Austria, constitutes a real risk for Italy. Although the disease is not dangerous to humans, it is highly contagious among farm animals and can cause serious economic damage.

In 2024, Italy imported tens of thousands of live animals from countries now affected by the outbreaks. With the arrival of Easter, which is a key period for sheep and goat imports, there is a heightened risk of the virus spreading.

Given the alarm among farmers, and bearing in mind their legitimate concerns, can the Commission answer the following questions:

1. What preventive measures will it take, in this and other similar cases, to limit the spread of these diseases and the ensuing economic damage?
2. Is it envisaging a tightening-up of border controls and a review of the European rules on animal biosafety and traceability in the light of the increasing frequency of these health emergencies?
3. Has financial support been envisaged for livestock farms which suffer direct or indirect damage linked with the spread of the virus?

Submitted: 11.4.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(30 June 2025)

The Commission has implemented preventive measures for foot and mouth disease (FMD), which include: i) closely monitoring the EU situation; ii) developing specific legislation with disease control measures for FMD and other diseases ⁽¹⁾ within an EU legal framework ⁽²⁾, iii) adopting immediate emergency measures with FMD regionalisation measures ⁽³⁾ which require movement restrictions and controls in the restricted zones, thus protecting the EU internal market with tighter biosecurity measures; iv) ensuring EU coordination through standing committee meetings ⁽⁴⁾; v) managing and deploying vaccine doses from the EU FMD antigen bank; vi) providing support to all Member States, including training ⁽⁵⁾ and dispatching the EU Veterinary Emergency Team ⁽⁶⁾ on-site to assist the competent authorities; vii) regularly informing Member States and trading partners ⁽⁷⁾ about the evolution of the epidemiological situation, and viii) maintaining constant dialogue with trading partners to advocate for the recognition of EU regionalisation and to avoid unjustified trade bans.

EU co-financing of emergency veterinary measures is available under the Commission's Single Market Programme, covering costs related to animal culling, owner compensation, and premises cleaning and disinfecting.

Support is also possible under the common agricultural policy ⁽⁸⁾ for risk management (e.g., insurance), on-farm biosecurity (e.g., fencing), and agricultural restoration post-outbreaks (i.e., restocking).

⁽¹⁾ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases (OJ L 174, 3.6.2020, p. 64, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/687/oj).

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law') (OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/429/oj>).

⁽³⁾ The current regionalisation is regulated by Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/672 of 31 March 2025 concerning certain emergency measures relating to outbreaks of FMD in Hungary and Slovakia and repealing Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/613 (OJ L, 2025/672, 2.4.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2025/672/oj).

⁽⁴⁾ Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed: https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/committees/paff-committees_en.

⁽⁵⁾ Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) resources: <https://better-training-for-safer-food.ec.europa.eu/training/?lang=en>.

⁽⁶⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-diseases/veterinary-emergency-team_en.

⁽⁷⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a0dcc301-94d4-4eb3-8c64-8cda1d3afc92_en?filename=ad_control-measures_fmd_chron_de-20250110.pdf.

⁽⁸⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 (OJ L435, 6.12.2021, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115/2024-05-25>).

Additional emergency measures ⁽⁹⁾ for farmers affected by natural disasters, including animal diseases, were adopted on 19 December 2024. Member States may also request exceptional support ⁽¹⁰⁾ for farmers impacted by trade restrictions due to animal diseases.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R3242&qid=1735899275178>.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Article 220 of Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1308/2024-11-08>).