

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001849/25
to the Commission
Roberto Vannacci (P/E)
(7 May 2025)**

Subject: Impact of strengthened controls on Brazilian black pepper: unfair competition for Italian and European spice processors

Due to rising Rapid Alert System ⁽¹⁾ notifications based on analyses of unprocessed or semi-processed pepper at EU borders, the Commission, under the Official Controls Regulation ⁽²⁾, has reinforced controls on black pepper imports from Brazil, creating a de facto sanitary trade barrier.

Salmonella poses a serious risk in ready-to-eat foods, and Italian and European spice processors recognise that it must be eliminated, along with E. coli, Listeria and other natural agricultural contaminants. Hence, they have invested heavily in steam sterilisation equipment, making sterilisation a key hazard control step.

Despite these efforts, increased official controls have led to a sharp drop in Brazilian pepper imports. The way the analysis is performed makes it unnecessary to perform sterilisation in the EU, giving an advantage to non-EU operators who import raw pepper, sterilise it abroad, and re-export it to the EU, occasionally using dilution techniques or other practices banned in the EU, creating unfair competition for European spice processors.

Considering the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Is it aware that Brazilian pepper is diverted to other countries and re-enters the EU in spice blends?
2. What is its position on the unfair competition faced by Italian and European spice processors?
3. Does it intend to treat black pepper as a raw material and allow clearance after port sterilisation, as in the US?

Submitted: 7.5.2025

**Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(8 July 2025)**

Available statistics show a significant decrease of EU imports of Brazilian pepper either crushed or ground over the last three years. However, statistical data do not indicate the quantity of Brazilian pepper contained in spice mixtures imported into the EU from other third countries.

A Commission priority is to ensure a strong and effective protection of human, animal, and plant health, which may comprise related aspects provided in the Commission Notice ⁽¹⁾ on the evaluation of risks, on a case-by-case basis.

Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 ⁽²⁾ requires that food and feed imported for placing it on the market within the EU comply with the relevant requirements of food law.

Regulation (EU) 2019/1793 ⁽³⁾ lays down the list of food and feed of non-animal origin subject to a temporary increase of official controls or special conditions upon their entry into the EU, aiming to enhance food safety and thus public health by ensuring compliance with EU agri-food legislation. Black pepper (*piper nigrum*) originating from Brazil is listed in that regulation due to possible contamination by Salmonella.

When a consignment of pepper is declared as non-compliant due to a presence of Salmonella exceeding the criteria laid down in EU legislation, Article 66 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 ⁽⁴⁾ provides that the consignment must be destroyed, re-dispatched outside the EU or subject to special treatment. This is a safety measure to protect the health of EU consumers.

The compliance level of Brazilian peppers observed in 2024 was satisfactory.

¹ https://food.ec.europa.eu/food-safety/rasff_en.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017R0625>.

⁽¹⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2022_265_R_0001.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2002/178/oj/eng>.

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

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/625/oj>.