*(English version)*

**Question for written answer E-002316/25**
**to the Commission**
**Marie Toussaint (Verts/ALE)**
*(10 June 2025)*

*Subject:* Cadmium — a health bomb: what will Europe do about it?

On 2 June, the French National Conference of Regional Unions of Health Professionals and General Practitioners alerted the authorities to the exposure of the French population to cadmium. France, along with Poland, Spain and Portugal, is among the European countries most affected by this toxic substance. Children are particularly susceptible to it and the incidence of related pancreatic cancers is exploding.

Cadmium, contained in phosphate rock used for fertiliser production, is found in cereals, potatoes and leaf vegetables.

While the EU plans to gradually reduce exposure standards, France has just adopted much higher thresholds than those which should apply by 2034, which risks prolonging the contamination for several decades due to the persistence of cadmium in the environment.

In this context, several questions arise:

1. How is the Commission supporting Member States in their strategies to reduce exposure to cadmium?

2. Can the Commission set out an accelerated strategy for disengaging from phosphate fertilisers, particularly imported fertilisers, and not just those from Russia, since the majority of fertilisers used in France come from Morocco?

Submitted: 10.6.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission**
*(20 August 2025)*

1. Commission Recommendation 2014/193 ([1]) provided recommendations to Member States so that mitigation measures for reduction of cadmium levels in food, in particular in cereals, vegetables and potatoes, are progressively implemented by farmers and food business operators. As cadmium is taken up by plants from the soil, avoiding the use of phosphate fertilisers containing high levels of cadmium, is such a measure for avoiding elevated concentrations of cadmium in edible crops. The Soil Monitoring Law ([2]), provisionally agreed between co-legislators, requires that Member States monitor and assess the concentration of a set of heavy metals, including cadmium, in the soil. Member States should also establish criteria for healthy soil condition for these contaminants.

Annex I to Regulation (EU) 2023/915 ([3]) on maximum levels for certain contaminants in food sets maximum levels for cadmium in a wide range of foods, including cereals, potatoes and leaf vegetables. These maximum levels are applicable in all Member States and guarantee a reduction in consumer exposure to cadmium.

2. Phosphates play an essential and irreplaceable role in plant growth and food production. While phosphate fertilisers are not the sole source of cadmium contamination in soil, limits on cadmium levels have been set in Regulation 2019/100 9 ([4]). Furthermore, phosphorus can also be recovered from different waste streams, free of cadmium, for the production of phosphate fertilisers. Thus, the EU is working towards disengaging from the sole use of phosphate rock to produce fertilisers and efforts are made to promote the use of secondary phosphorus-containing materials, which should at the same time reduce dependency on imported phosphate rock.

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([1]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2014/193/oj.
([2]) Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law) COM/2023/416 final.
([3]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/915/oj.
([4]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1009/oj.