

(English version)

Question for written answer E-003181/25
to the Commission
Daniel Buda (PPE)
(5 August 2025)

Subject: Competitiveness challenges in the agri-food sector

In 2024, the European Union's agri-food trade balance shrank significantly compared to the previous year. Although exports increased slightly, imports rose more sharply, resulting in a drop in the EU's trade surplus from EUR 70.1 billion in 2023 to EUR 63.6 billion in 2024. This development raises question marks over the competitiveness of European agri-food products as regards price, quality standards, certification requirements, traceability, adaptability to global market requirements and production and transport costs.

In view of these considerations:

1. Based on the Commission's assessments, what are the structural and cyclical causes of the decline in the trade surplus in 2024 compared to 2023, and what measures are being envisaged to reverse this trend?
2. How does the Commission assess the impact that differences in the competitiveness of European products — including in terms of price, quality and certification — have on their position on external markets?
3. What effects have trade agreements had and/or are they expected to have on the EU's agri-food trade balance?

Supporter ⁽¹⁾

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

As explained in the Commission's publication 'Monitoring EU agri-food trade' covering developments in 2024 ⁽¹⁾, the decline of the value of EU agri-food trade balance in 2024 can be attributed mainly to price increases of certain products for which the EU is a net importer (especially cocoa products, coffee, fruits and nuts).

These higher prices led to an increase of the value of EU imports of coffee, tea, cocoa and spices of EUR 9.8 billion in 2024, which impacts the overall EU agri-food trade balance in value terms. However, EU exports continued to grow, and the EU remained a large net exporter.

Reinforcing the competitiveness of European agriculture is a key objective of the Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽²⁾. For this purpose, it sets out several actions including the intention to pursue international partnerships, diversifying trade relations, creating new export opportunities and reducing the administrative burden for farmers and food businesses.

Furthermore, the Commission regularly analyses the policy, trade and market drivers affecting the future of EU agriculture through its EU agricultural outlook report ⁽³⁾, most recently published in December 2024.

Based on this, the EU is expected to remain a net exporter in the next decade across a variety of key agricultural products. This is also thanks to a growing demand for the EU quality products.

A study ⁽⁴⁾ conducted by the Commission's Joint Research Centre in 2024 assessed the economic impact of upcoming trade agreements on the EU agriculture.

It confirms that they would result in a balanced increase of both exports and imports, supporting a slight increase in the EU trade balance.

¹ This question is supported by a Member other than the author: Dan-Ștefan Motreanu (PPE)

⁽¹⁾ EC (2025), Monitoring EU agri-food trade. European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Brussels. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/8e6be7cf-e1d2-48fd-9114-90c448e09643_en?filename=monitoring-agri-food-trade_dec2024_en.pdf.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075>.

⁽³⁾ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/data-and-analysis/markets/outlook/medium-term_en.

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_1001.