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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
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Food products from third countries, regardless of their origin, must comply with EU food safety standards laid down in EU legislation. According to Regulation (EU) 2017/625¹, Member States must carry out official controls and enforcement activities at all stages of distribution, including for imports.

So as to ensure compliance with maximum residue levels of pesticides, all Member States have to sample rice, every three years according to the coordinated multiannual control programme of the EU, that is a rolling programme (currently Commission Implementing Regulation 2024/989²).

Where food of non-animal origin from third countries, such as rice, poses a risk, the Commission adopts measures through Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793³, including increased frequency and special conditions governing their entry into the EU.

Member States are to impose penalties applicable to the infringement of the EU agri-food chain legislation. These penalties shall be effective, proportionate, dissuasive. Furthermore, the Member States' competent authorities are responsible for the removal of non-compliant goods from the EU market.

The Commission performs audits in Member States and in third countries to ensure that their official control systems guarantee that goods intended for export to the EU comply with the applicable EU rules.

¹ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/625/oj>.

² http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/989/oj.

³ http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/1793/oj.