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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
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Food imported from third countries must meet the same sanitary requirements as food produced in the EU, these standards are non-negotiable in trade discussions.

The EU cannot impose on third countries its prescriptions of antibiotics rules, but exporters must ensure that animal products, such as meat, comply with EU maximum residue levels for pharmacologically active substances such as antimicrobials. To verify this, countries exporting to the EU must annually submit control plans for residues of pharmacologically active substances, pesticides and contaminants in food-producing animals and food of animal origin, as well as the results of testing from the previous year. These tests cover a wide range of antibiotics. The Commission assesses these plans and results yearly.

The Commission conducts regular audits on exporting countries, like Brazil, and publishes reports¹ that highlight any non-compliance issues, prompting corrective actions by the relevant authorities. The Commission monitors effectiveness of these actions. If there is a direct threat to public or animal health, or if a country fails to meet EU standards, the Commission may suspend or remove it from the list of approved countries for exporting animal products.

Additionally, over the next two years, the EU plans to enhance compliance checks by increasing audits of exporting countries by 50% and implementing measures to bolster borders controls.

Finally, as from 3 September 2026, stricter import rules will apply to ensure third countries do not export products from animals treated with antimicrobials for growth promotion or those reserved for human infections in the EU. This initiative aims to combat global antimicrobial resistance.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report>.