

(English version)

Question for written answer E-005010/25
to the Commission
Daniel Buda (PPE)
(18 December 2025)

Subject: Export of banned toxic substances

The EU continues to export cyanamide to vineyards in South Africa, when this substance is banned in the Union owing to its serious health risks. Research has shown that some workers who have handled the product without adequate protection have suffered lung damage. NGOs have condemned the situation as a human rights scandal, but the South African authorities argue that the wine industry depends on this product and there are no equally-effective alternatives. Although the Commission pledged as early as 2020 to stop exports of toxic pesticides to third countries, it has not yet taken any concrete action ⁽¹⁾.

1. Given that the EU banned cyanamide precisely to protect human health, how can it justify that substance continuing to be produced in the EU and being exported to third countries?
2. Why is the Commission allowing the use of this banned substance in the production of agricultural goods that may subsequently enter Europe, especially as farmers and citizens are demanding the application of equivalent safety and production standards?
3. How can the Commission ensure that no imported product contains substances classified as dangerous for EU citizens and thus guarantee the consistency and credibility of EU consumer protection policies?

Submitted: 18.12.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(2 March 2026)

Exports of cyanamide are subject to an explicit consent procedure under which countries decide if they wish to import certain hazardous chemicals. The Commission bilaterally works with third countries to ensure they can fully use their legal rights under Regulation (EU) No 649/2012 ⁽¹⁾.

In Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 (the MRL Regulation) ⁽²⁾, maximum residue levels (MRLs) for cyanamide are set at the limit of quantification (technical zero) for all food and feed commodities, meaning that food or feed containing residues of cyanamide cannot be imported into the EU.

The MRL Regulation guarantees a high level of consumer protection by ensuring food produced in the EU or imported into the EU does not contain pesticides residues at levels posing a risk for consumers.

It also aims to facilitate trade and allows imports of products from third countries even if they contain substances not approved in the EU, if they have been found safe.

In its Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽³⁾, the Commission announced to establish the principle that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health and environmental reasons are not allowed back in the EU through imported products.

To advance work on this, in November 2025 the Commission launched an impact assessment including a study on the impact on farmers, suppliers and consumers establishing a closer alignment of production standards that apply to imported products. If appropriate, the Commission will propose amendments to the applicable legal framework.

In the meantime, in the Food and Feed Simplification Package ⁽⁴⁾ adopted on 16 December 2025, the Commission proposed to establish in the MRL Regulation a possibility to act on a case-by-case basis, if considered appropriate in the outcome of an impact assessment.

¹ <https://www.euractiv.com/news/eu-exports-of-banned-chemical-sparks-outcry-in-south-african-vineyards/>

⁽¹⁾ Cyanamide is listed in Part 2 of the Annex I of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Regulation — Regulation (EU) No 649/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 concerning the export and import of hazardous chemicals.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 February 2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin and amending Council Directive 91/414/EEC. OJ L 70, 16.3.2005, pp. 1-16.

⁽³⁾ COM/2025/75 final.

⁽⁴⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/simplification-legislation_en.