

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000082/26
to the Commission
Vicent Marzà Ibáñez (Verts/ALE)
(12 January 2026)**

Subject: Health checks on imported meat

Given the Commission's own published data, showing that in 2024 only 0.0082% of the more than 4.777 billion products imported into the EU were subjected to physical checks, and the fact that 16.4% of the products inspected were rejected for failing to comply with health, safety or quality standards, it is difficult to argue that the current border control system ensures European consumers are adequately protected. This also gives rise to blatantly unfair competition for EU producers, who are obliged to comply with increasingly strict standards, while goods from third countries are waved through into the EU market with clearly insufficient checks.

1. In this context, and given the trade agreements in force or under negotiation with countries whose regulatory frameworks differ significantly from that of the EU, what does the European Commission intend to do to ensure a minimum level of mandatory, binding and effective inspections in all Member States?
2. Does the Commission intend to reform the current legislation in order to strengthen border controls, establish penalty mechanisms for non-compliance and ensure that imports meet the same standards required of European producers?

Submitted: 12.1.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(7 April 2026)**

EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements are non-negotiable and apply to all imports irrespective of trade agreements with third countries.

The figures mentioned in the question seem to reflect the controls in the context of the regulation 2019/1020 ⁽¹⁾ (which do not apply to the importation of meat) and not to the SPS controls.

A harmonised, risk-based system of official controls, established under Regulation (EU) 2017/625 ⁽²⁾, ensures mandatory inspections in all Member States.

The Commission monitors the compliance of imports and will reinforce the enforcement in this area through an increase in the number of audits performed on third countries and Member States, closer monitoring of non-compliant commodities and countries (with frequency of checks increased as required), support to Member States carrying out these additional checks and additional training to Member States' officials ⁽³⁾.

The Commission regularly audits Member States to verify their import controls. Audit reports on Border Control Posts ⁽⁴⁾ do not identify significant systemic non-compliances on the performance of Member States' checks.

The Commission also established a Task Force on Import Controls ⁽⁵⁾ to increase the EU's response to further strengthening the control on imports, in line with its Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽⁶⁾. Where justified, the Commission may assess targeted adjustments to the legal framework.

Although the Commission considers that the current legislative framework provides a robust basis for effective border controls, it is also working on the revision of the Union Customs Code, as part of the EU Customs Reform ⁽⁷⁾, currently examined by the co-legislators.

Through such reform, the Commission aims to improve the capabilities of EU customs.

⁽¹⁾ Report on controls on products entering the EU market with regard to product compliance in 2024 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ea5db20e-840f-11f0-9af8-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

⁽²⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/625/oj>.

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2979.

⁽⁴⁾ Health and Food Audits and Analysis https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/official-controls-and-enforcement/health-and-food-audits-and-analysis_en.

⁽⁵⁾ Import controls of food and feed Q&As — Food Safety: https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/official-controls-and-enforcement/import-controls-food-and-feed-qas_en.

⁽⁶⁾ Vision for Agriculture and Food — Agriculture and rural development: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/vision-agriculture-and-food_en.

⁽⁷⁾ https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs/eu-customs-reform_en.