

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000385/26
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(29 January 2026)**

Subject: Increased consumer health risks from products originating in MERCOSUR

Alongside the EU-MERCOSUR agreement process and in light of official audits by the Commission (DG SANTE report 2024-8087), serious questions are being raised about the adequate protection of public health in the single market.

The Commission mission to Brazil (27 May — 14 June 2024) revealed significant gaps in the reliability of the competent authorities' declarations of compliance and the impossibility of fully ensuring that substances banned in the EU, such as 17-beta estradiol, a substance that has been scientifically linked to serious risks to human health, are not used for the purposes of animal husbandry.

At the same time, a public debate is taking place in several Member States on imports of fruit and vegetables containing residues of plant protection products, pesticides and antibiotics that have been banned in the EU but are still used in MERCOSUR.

In view of the above:

1. How does the Commission assess the level of information among the general public on the potential cumulative and long-term health risks of imported MERCOSUR products that may be associated with substances banned in the EU (hormones, pesticides, antibiotics)?
2. Does the Commission intend to propose specific measures to provide transparency and guidance to consumers (such as enhanced origin labelling, targeted information campaigns or systematic publication of test results) so that they can avoid products that pose a higher health risk?
3. What changes or reinforcements does it consider necessary in the national health systems of the Member States in order to prevent and address potential health damage that could be linked to increased imports from MERCOSUR?

Submitted: 29.1.2026

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

Any food product placed on the EU market domestically produced or imported must comply with the EU's sanitary and phytosanitary requirements ⁽¹⁾. These apply regardless of trade agreements with third countries such as the EU-Mercosur agreement.

The EU prohibits the use of hormones for growth promotion, also to imported meat products. From 3 September 2026 ⁽²⁾ stricter rules will apply.

Food-producing animals and products derived therefrom exported to the EU must originate from animals that have never been administered antimicrobials for promoting growth or increasing yield, nor those reserved in the EU for the treatment of certain infections in humans. This requirement is applicable throughout the animal's lifetime.

For pesticides residues, the Commission established a principle that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health and environmental reasons are not allowed in the EU through imports. Several actions were already taken for this. A study informing an impact assessment was launched last year.

The Food and Feed Safety Simplification package adopted on 16 December 2025 ⁽³⁾ operationalises this principle. Updates to maximum residue levels are also continuously based on developments in international standards.

These rules are enforced through rigorous border controls and regular audits on third countries. When a shortcoming is identified, the third country is required to place the necessary corrective measures.

If these measures prove insufficient and there is a serious risk to human and/or animal health, the goods' import from the third country may be suspended.

⁽¹⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/official-controls-and-enforcement/import-controls-food-and-feed-qas_en.

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2023/905/oj.

⁽³⁾ COM(2025) 1021 final; COM(2025) 1030 final.

EU food labelling rules apply also to all food products, including imports, and require mandatory origin labelling for certain products.

On 9 December 2025 ⁽⁴⁾ the Commission announced a 50% increase of audits in third countries over the next two years as well as the establishment of a Task Force to further strengthen controls on imports.

⁽⁴⁾ This was announced at the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare's Implementation Dialogue on import controls. https://food.ec.europa.eu/events/implementation-dialogue-import-controls-commissioner-oliver-varhelyi-2025-12-09_en.