(English version)

Question for written answer E-000884/26
to the Commission
Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR)
(4 March 2026)

Subject: Safety of beef imported from Mercosur countries in light of the detection of prohibited hormonal substances

In November 2025, notifications were registered in the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) concerning the detection of 17β-oestradiol in batches of beef imported from Brazil. This substance is completely banned for use in animals kept for food production in the EU under Directive 96/22/EC. According to Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, food imported into the EU must meet requirements equivalent to those of the EU. Regulation (EU) 2017/625 also requires the Commission to supervise third countries' control systems and allows for the adoption of safeguard measures in the event of a serious risk.

In light of the announced provisional implementation of the EU-Mercosur trade provisions, this incident raises questions about the effectiveness of export certification and the equivalence of Brazil's veterinary control system.

In light of the above:

1. Did the Commission carry out a special audit of Brazil's control system following the RASFF notification in November 2025?

2. Was the suspension of the approval of specific Brazilian establishments under Regulation (EU) 2017/625 considered?

3. Are there plans to strengthen border and laboratory controls for beef imports from the Mercosur region?

Submitted: 4.3.2026

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(11 May 2026)

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notification from November 2025 followed a Commission audit in Brazil. It was during this audit that the Commission's auditors identified beef consignments containing products from female cattle treated with oestradiol. The Commission promptly shared this information with all Member States that received potentially affected consignments.

The Commission conducts regular audits on exporting countries, like Brazil, with publicly available reports describing any non-compliance and prompting corrective actions by the competent authorities. The effectiveness of these actions is followed up by the Commission.

In this case, upon Commission's request, Brazil delisted the farm where non-compliances were identified, from the list of farms authorised for export of bovine meat to the EU.

Brazil also suspended the activity of the certification body, until it is proved that all shortcomings have been remedied and effective controls are in place.

Consequently, all farms certified by this certification body are also suspended. A follow-up audit will be conducted to verify the effectiveness of the Brazil's action plan and to ensure and maintain the EU high food safety standards.

The EU plans to enhance its controls of compliance with EU requirements by increasing its audits of countries exporting to the EU by 50% over the next two years and of border posts in charge of the control of imported products and animals by 33% ([1]).

([1]) As announced during the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare implementation dialogue on import controls: https://food.ec.europa.eu/events/implementation-dialogue-import-controls-commissioner-oliver-varhelyi-2025-12-09_en.