

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000908/26
to the Commission
Gerald Hauser (PfE)
(4 March 2026)**

Subject: Inadequate checks on meat imports from Mercosur countries

In its answer to Written Question E-004873/2025 ⁽¹⁾ on hormones and antibiotics in meat from Mercosur countries, the Commission states that imported foodstuffs must fulfil the same health requirements as products from the EU. These standards are apparently binding and non-negotiable in all trade agreements, including the Mercosur agreement. The Commission refers to inspections and control measures as safeguards.

A recent scandal has, however, revealed significant weaknesses in the system of checks: Some 63 tonnes of beef from Brazil, said to have been contaminated with the growth hormone oestradiol, which is banned in the EU, were imported into the EU and sold on. Traces of this substance have been found in around 10 Member States. A further 25 tonnes of frozen meat were seized in the Netherlands before entering circulation. Oestradiol is alleged to be harmful to human health. ⁽²⁾

1. How was hormone-contaminated meat able to enter the EU despite the existing checks, and how will it be ensured that such an incident never recurs?
2. What percentage of meat imports from third countries are actually tested for antibiotics, hormones and other residues (specifically pharmacologically active substances)?
3. Are six planned inspections in the Mercosur countries for 2026 — two of them in Brazil — sufficient to guarantee food safety in the EU?

Submitted: 4.3.2026

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

The EU import control system operates at several levels. It includes audits in third countries to verify that they have effective controls in place, preventing unsafe goods from being dispatched to the EU.

It also provides for risk-based controls at EU borders to detect non-compliances upon entry, and random sampling and testing in the EU.

The EU framework ensures that if an issue is detected after import, it is communicated through the EU rapid alert networks and addressed in a coordinated manner across all Member States.

In this context, during the Commission audit in Brazil in October 2025 ⁽¹⁾, auditors identified consignments of beef from female cattle treated with a hormone banned in the EU, exported to the EU.

Information was swiftly shared with all Member States that received these consignments. The Commission has no confirmation of hormonal residues found by Member States in any of these consignments.

In response, the Commission increased the minimum frequency rates of physical check rates for bovine minced meat and meat preparations from Brazil up to 50%, and for other bovine fresh meat up to 30% ⁽²⁾. Member States were advised to sample these products. None of the laboratory tests revealed unsatisfactory results.

Under Regulation (EU) 2022/1646 ⁽³⁾, Member States must test at least 7% of imported bovine consignments for pharmacologically active substances.

Additionally, the Commission evaluates third countries' residue control plans, results of their implementation annually, and audits the execution of residue controls.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-004873-ASW_EN.html.

² <https://ktn.lko.at/belastetes-brasilianisches-hormonfleisch-in-die-eu-importiert+2400+4381827>.

⁽¹⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report/details/4975>.

⁽²⁾ According to Article 5(3) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2129 of 25 November 2019 establishing rules for the uniform application of frequency rates for identity checks and physical checks on certain consignments of animals and goods entering the Union. OJ L 321 12.12.2019, p. 122. (http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/2129/2021-12-26).

⁽³⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1646 of 23 September 2022 on uniform practical arrangements for the performance of official controls as regards the use of pharmacologically active substances authorised as veterinary medicinal products or as feed additives and of prohibited or unauthorised pharmacologically active substances and residues thereof, on specific content of multi-annual national control plans and specific arrangements for their preparation. OJ L 248, 26.9.2022, pp. 32. (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2022/1646/oj/eng).

For 2026 and 2027, the Commission has increased its audits on countries exporting to the EU by 50% and at border control posts by 33%.

The EU's system is designed to respond swiftly and effectively whenever a risk emerges.
