

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001184/26
to the Commission
Konstantinos Arvanitis (The Left)
(22 March 2026)**

Subject: Outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Lesbos and the need for immediate European assistance

The outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Lesbos highlights the vulnerability of island and border regions in the European Union in the face of health crises affecting primary production. Small and medium-sized farmers are confronted with livestock losses and restrictions on their activity, and their economic survival is at serious risk, without adequate support from the EU.

The European Commission's response seems to be limited to the implementation of pre-existing protocols and assistance upon request, without a clear commitment to prompt funding or full compensation. However, this approach shifts the burden of the crisis onto Member States and producers, exacerbating regional disparities and undermining the viability of the rural economy.

Protecting the health of livestock, ensuring food security and supporting rural communities cannot and should not be treated solely as technical issues, but require immediate, coordinated and adequately funded European intervention.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Why are European immediate intervention mechanisms not activated pre-emptively?
2. Will it immediately mobilise European funds to fully compensate livestock farmers in Lesbos and strengthen public veterinary services?
3. Will it cover the costs of the necessary sanitary measures?

Submitted: 22.3.2026

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

The Commission, preparing for future health crisis related to important animal disease, pre-emptively set up the EU legal framework ⁽¹⁾ for emergency disease control measures for animal diseases and allocated funds for: maintaining the EU food and mouth disease (FMD) antigen bank that is available to Member States upon request ⁽²⁾; and EU co-financing of emergency veterinary measures under the rules set by the SMP ⁽³⁾.

This includes costs related to sanitary measures such as culling of animals on affected farms, compensating their owners, and cleaning, disinfecting the affected premises ⁽⁴⁾.

Moreover, via the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plans ⁽⁵⁾, Member States may support restoration investments following animal disease outbreaks.

Under the new crisis payment through the simplification package ⁽⁶⁾, Member States may amend their Plans to introduce crisis payments for farmers affected by animal diseases, subject to formal recognition of the outbreak and the applicable loss threshold.

The Commission may also adopt exceptional support measures for market losses linked to restrictions imposed to curb disease spread.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases ('Animal Health Law') (OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/429/oj>); Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019, as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases (OJ L 174, 3.6.2020, p. 64, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/687/oj) and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/361 of 28 November 2022, as regards rules for the use of certain veterinary medicinal products for the purpose of prevention and control of certain listed diseases (OJ L 52, 20.2.2023, pp. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2023/361/oj).

⁽²⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-diseases/diseases-and-control-measures/foot-and-mouth-disease_en.

⁽³⁾ Single Market Programme — Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (OJ L 153, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/690/oj>).

⁽⁴⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/c1ed1748-1b55-4e7b-add0-b7eb41c65a3e_en?filename=cff_animal_emergency-measures_ah-ms-guidelines.pdf.

⁽⁵⁾ Common Agricultural Policy — Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 (OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, pp. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115/oj>).

⁽⁶⁾ Regulation (EU) 2025/2649 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2025 amending Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 as regards the conditionality system, types of intervention in the form of direct payment, types of intervention in certain sectors and rural development and annual performance reports and Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 as regards suspensions of payments, annual performance clearance and controls and penalties, PE/49/2025/REV/1 (OJ L, 2025/2649, 31.12.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/2649/oj>)

In addition, the Commission is: i) closely monitoring the FMD situation in the EU and its neighbourhood; ii) adopting immediate measures to enable FMD regionalisation ⁽⁷⁾ and protecting the EU internal market; iii) ensuring EU coordination through comitology ⁽⁸⁾; iv) providing support to all Member States, including through the EU Reference Laboratory ⁽⁹⁾, training ⁽¹⁰⁾, and dispatching the EU Veterinary Emergency Team ⁽¹¹⁾ on-site to assist the competent authorities; v) regularly informing Member States and trading partners ⁽¹²⁾ about the evolution of the epidemiological situation; and vi) maintaining dialogue with trading partners to avoid unjustified trade bans and with international organisations ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ The Commission adopted Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2026/732 of 20 March 2026 concerning certain interim emergency measures relating to foot and mouth disease in Greece (OJ L, 2026/732, 24.3.2026, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2026/732/oj).

⁽⁸⁾ Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed: https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/committees/paff-committees_en.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://eurl-fmd.anses.fr/en/minisite/lrue-fievre-aphteuse/welcome-website-european-union-reference-laboratory-foot-and-mouth>.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) resources: <https://better-training-for-safer-food.ec.europa.eu/training/?lang=en>.

⁽¹¹⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-diseases/veterinary-emergency-team_en.

⁽¹²⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/77095016-118f-4792-a0fc-4c89327c2d43_en?filename=ad_control-measures_fmd_chron-cyp.pdf.

⁽¹³⁾ World Organisation for Animal Health (<https://www.woah.org/>) and The European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease — EuFMD (<https://www.fao.org/eufmd/en/>).