

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001306/26
to the Commission
Nikolaos Anadiotis (NI)
(30 March 2026)**

Subject: Zoning, external border controls and the functioning of the single market following the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Greece

The confirmed outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Lesvos led to the immediate activation of European protocols, including the culling of animals, the creation of control zones and the suspension of exports. At the same time, cross-border transmission through uncontrolled imports from non-EU countries is reportedly being considered ⁽¹⁾.

Applying the 'zoning' principle is crucial in order to limit trade measures to affected regions only and avoid a disproportionate impact on national production and the single market as a whole.

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

1. How does it ensure the uniform implementation of zoning by non-EU trading partners to avoid blanket bans on exports beyond the affected areas?
2. How does it assess the risk of asymmetric trade restrictions distorting the single market and what mechanisms does it intend to put in place to prevent them?

Submitted: 30.3.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(10 June 2026)**

The Commission assesses the regionalisation measures applied by third countries in relation to foot and mouth disease and other listed animal diseases based on international standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), and on relevant EU legislation. It includes documentary reviews and, where appropriate, on-the-spot audits of the implementation of the measures in place.

On this basis, the Commission adopts legal acts ⁽¹⁾, recognising disease-free areas and restricted zones in third countries for specific diseases and commodities.

These acts ensure that trade from third countries into the EU is aligned with the zoning principle and only when the appropriate level of guarantees is met.

Trade restrictions adopted by third countries are unilateral decisions. The Commission seeks to minimise the risk of disproportionate measures with transparency on the animal health situation in the EU and on the regionalisation measures applied in response to outbreaks.

It does so by providing a solid EU legal framework ⁽²⁾ for emergency disease control measures for animal diseases, timely disease notifications ⁽³⁾, regular information to Member States and trading partners. In addition, the EU promotes the application of regionalisation as a trade-facilitating tool with multilateral and bilateral actions.

¹ <https://www.agrocapital.gr/news/107037/bryxelles-kampanaki-gia-tin-ellada-meta-ton-afthwdi-pyreto-mploko-se-exagwges-kai-mazikes-thanatwseis-zwwn>.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 of 24 March 2021 laying down the lists of third countries, territories or zones thereof from which the entry into the Union of animals, germinal products and products of animal origin is permitted in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council (OJ L 114, 31.3.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2021/404/oj).

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('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 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council, 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 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council 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).

⁽³⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2002 of 7 December 2020 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to Union notification and Union reporting of listed diseases, to formats and procedures for submission and reporting of Union surveillance programmes and of eradication programmes and for application for recognition of disease-free status, and to the computerised information system (OJ L 412, 8.12.2020, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2020/2002/oj).

Where third countries nevertheless apply measures that are not consistent with international standards, the Commission seeks justification aligned with World Trade Organisation (WTO)/WOAH-aligned criteria, provides supporting evidence from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and, where appropriate, pursues consultations through WTO mechanisms and Free Trade Agreement provisions.
