

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001662/26
to the Commission
Konstantinos Arvanitis (The Left)
(22 April 2026)**

Subject: Need to strengthen controls and ensure reciprocity of standards on imports of processed fruit, vegetables and tomato products from non-EU countries

The European fruit and vegetable processing industry warns of the increasing pressure on the single market from non-EU imports of products that are often produced at lower costs, as they are not subject to the same strict standards on pesticide residues, food safety and traceability, nor to the environmental and labour standards that apply to European producers, without any effective guarantee of full equivalence of production and control conditions.

This situation creates conditions of unfair competition to the detriment of European processing, undermines the resilience of the EU agri-food chain, weakens strategic production sectors and raises legitimate concerns for consumer protection and the EU's strategic autonomy in the food sector.

Given the Commission's stated recognition of the need for stronger alignment of the standards applied to imported products, in particular as regards pesticides:

1. Does the Commission intend to strengthen targeted border and laboratory controls on processed fruit and vegetables from non-EU countries immediately, as well as to revise the current framework of official controls on food of non-animal origin, in order to include products and countries of origin that systematically show compliance problems in a regime of enhanced surveillance more quickly?
2. What specific measures does the Commission intend to take to ensure substantial equivalence of production standards in products imported from non-EU countries, as well as to protect the competitiveness of European processing and consumer safety?

Submitted: 22.4.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(3 July 2026)**

Food products from third countries, regardless of their origin, must comply with EU food safety requirements laid down in EU legislation.

According to Regulation (EU) 2017/625 ⁽¹⁾ official controls have to be performed on goods entering the Union. Member States must carry out risk-based official controls on processed fruit and vegetables from non-EU countries.

Where food of non-animal origin from third countries poses a risk, the Commission may adopt measures through Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793 ⁽²⁾.

Under the Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽³⁾, the Commission pursues a stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products.

The Commission announced a series of measures to strengthen import controls at EU borders and in third countries. The Commission performs audits in Member States and in third countries to ensure that their official control systems guarantee that goods intended for export to the EU comply with the applicable EU rules ⁽⁴⁾.

In addition, the Commission is working to avoid that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health and environmental reasons would be imported back into the EU through imported products.

The Joint Research Centre has commenced a study that will feed into an impact assessment. Pending the outcome of this impact assessment, the Commission has proposed in the Food and Feed Simplification Package ⁽⁵⁾ to establish the possibility for the Commission to lower Maximum Residues Limits (MRLs) for the most hazardous substances not approved in the EU on a case-by-case basis, if considered appropriate, in the light of the outcome of substance-specific impact assessments.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/625/oj>.

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/1793/oj.

⁽³⁾ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/vision-agriculture-and-food_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Health and Food Audits and Analysis https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/official-controls-and-enforcement/health-and-food-audits-and-analysis_en.

⁽⁵⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/simplification-legislation_en.