

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001772/26
to the Commission**

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(30 April 2026)

Subject: Systemic shortcomings in food safety controls and imports in the EU

Recent cases in several Member States have raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of controls across the food supply chain for products placed on the EU market. These cases include food products that were past their shelf life, of unclear origin, or found to contain non-compliant pesticide levels.

These are not isolated cases. Data for 2025 indicate hundreds of alerts per month within the RASFF ⁽¹⁾ system, while data from early 2026 confirm weekly alerts regarding unsafe food. At the same time, a significant number of suspected food fraud cases are being recorded, including issues related to traceability, origin and the unlawful extension of shelf life. Recurring cases of excessive pesticide levels in imported products also raise concerns about whether all EU consumers benefit from equal levels of protection and whether a level playing field is ensured within the internal market.

In this context:

1. How does the Commission assess the effectiveness of existing EU-level mechanisms for controlling food imports from non-EU countries, particularly regarding risk management and traceability?
2. How will the Commission ensure that its new AI tool ⁽²⁾ enhances prevention rather than merely reaction?
3. Does the Commission envisage additional measures to guarantee uniform standards and equal protection for all consumers in the EU?

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

1. The EU system for import controls is a live and flexible mechanism continuously monitored by the Commission through Information Management System for Official Controls (IMSOC) ⁽¹⁾ data and EU alert networks. It is regularly adapted where necessary through targeted risk-management measures, including intensified official controls under Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1873 ⁽²⁾, increased frequencies of physical checks for products of animal origin under Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2129 ⁽³⁾, and reinforced border controls for certain food and feed of non-animal origin under Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793 ⁽⁴⁾.

2. The new TraceMap is not a predictive tool but analyses existing data from the Alert and Cooperation Network and TRACES to identify suspicious patterns more efficiently. By automating traceability mapping through AI-assisted analysis, it enables proactive screening of more cases and significantly reduces response times for recalls and investigations, thereby strengthening preventive risk management and evidence-based enforcement.

3. The EU already has a robust and well-established system for food import controls, based on harmonised legislation, risk analysis, and close cooperation between the Commission and Member States. The system evolves continuously in response to emerging risks and fraud patterns. A recent example is the honey sector: following coordinated EU actions identifying suspected adulteration with sugar syrups, the EU strengthened authenticity requirements. Under the revised Honey Directive ⁽⁵⁾, the EU improved origin labelling, introduced new listing requirements for third-country establishments exporting honey to the EU, and will strengthen traceability systems.

¹ The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) was established to facilitate the exchange of information between Member States and to support swift action by food safety authorities in cases of risks to public health arising from the food chain.

² On 10 March 2026, the Commission presented a new artificial intelligence platform, TraceMap, aimed at accelerating the detection of food fraud, contaminated food and foodborne disease outbreaks across the EU.

⁽¹⁾ ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/1715/oj.

⁽²⁾ ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/1873/oj.

⁽³⁾ ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/2129/oj.

⁽⁴⁾ ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/1793/oj.

⁽⁵⁾ Council Directive 2001/110/EC of 20 December 2001 relating to honey; OJ L 10, 12.1.2002, pp. 47-52; ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/110/oj>.