

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002002/26
to the Commission**

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(13 May 2026)

Subject: Distortion of competition in EU trade agreements disadvantaging outermost regions

The farming and agro-industrial sectors in the outermost regions, and the sugar cane and rum sector in La Réunion in particular, are exposed to growing competition from products imported from third countries. Their production costs are often lower and they follow different standards.

The state of affairs is made worse by certain trade agreements concluded by the European Union. The agreements can distort competition and harm production in overseas regions, including in their high-end segments. Production in those regions is subject to stricter environmental requirements and faces higher structural costs owing to remoteness, insularity and logistical dependence.

At a time when food sovereignty and maintaining local production are strategic challenges for the outermost regions, imbalances of this kind cause lasting damage to the sectors concerned.

How does the Commission intend to make sure the principle of reciprocity in the Union's trade agreements is really upheld and better protect agricultural production in the outermost regions against competition from third countries?

Submitted: 13.5.2026

Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(3 August 2026)

Food products imported into the EU from third countries must comply with the strict food safety import requirements laid down in EU legislation and meet the same high food safety standards as EU products. These apply regardless of Free Trade Agreements (FTA) and are enforced through rigorous border controls and audits of third countries.

Agricultural sensitivities of outermost regions are particularly taken care of in trade negotiations. Trade concessions, if any, are mainly granted under the form of limited Tariff-Rate Quotas (TRQs).

Moreover, FTAs normally include a specific safeguard provision tailor-made for the outermost regions. A comprehensive study on the cumulative impact of FTA confirmed their positive benefit on the EU agri-food sector ⁽¹⁾.

The Commission will pursue ⁽²⁾, in line with international rules ⁽³⁾ and based on impact assessment, a stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products, such as on pesticides and animal welfare.

In that respect, the Commission will establish a principle that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health and environmental reasons are not allowed back into the EU through imported products.

EU policies contain numerous provisions recognising the specific situation of the outermost regions, notably POSEI ⁽⁴⁾, which supports the long-term viability of the agricultural sector, while strengthening food security, competitiveness and resilience.

⁽¹⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC135540>.

⁽²⁾ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations, COM/2025/75 final.

⁽³⁾ REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Application of EU health and environmental standards to imported agricultural and agri-food products, COM/2022/226 final.

⁽⁴⁾ The programme of options specifically relating to remoteness and insularity (POSEI) — <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02013R0228-20250627&qid=1780038981157>.