(English version)

Question for written answer E-002923/26
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(14 July 2026)

Subject: Checking potential cartels, territorial restrictions and coordinated practices in the European supermarket and basic consumer goods market

Prices of basic foods and everyday consumer goods are continuing to climb in many Member States, placing a disproportionate burden on households. However, this increase has not been reflected in the primary sector, where producers, including those in Greece, often do not receive higher prices. Nonetheless, final shelf prices continue to rise significantly, reinforcing concerns about distortions in the value chain.

At the same time, several European markets are seeing significant price differences for similar or identical products, as well as increased concentration in the retail sector and in the supply of basic goods. The presence of large multinational groups, possible territorial restrictions and the limited bargaining power of producers and smaller suppliers amplify concerns of poorly functioning competition.

With this in mind, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Does it intend to examine, in cooperation with national competition authorities, possible coordinated practices, cartel-like behaviour or indirect price harmonisation in the European supermarket sector?

2. Will it strengthen the tools for monitoring prices and profit margins in the agri-food chain, with a view to combating high prices?

3. Does it intend to propose a stronger European framework for checking for territorial supply constraints, concentration in the food market and practices of multinational groups that may lead to unjustifiably higher prices for consumers in smaller or more vulnerable markets, such as Greece?

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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera on behalf of the European Commission
(21 August 2026)

Retail markets for groceries are mostly national. National competition authorities (NCAs) are thus generally well-placed to monitor and investigate the practices of retailers and do so in consultation with the Commission. NCAs have found several agreements between manufacturers and retailers to raise prices, but no instances of cartels of retailers.

They have also assessed margins during the 2022-2024 inflation period and found, generally, that margins at retailers were stable or even decreased and that price increases in the food supply chain were mainly due to cost increases. NCAs continue monitoring these practices pro-actively.

The Commission also vigorously enforces competition rules in the food supply chain to protect consumers. For instance, the Commission sanctioned market partitioning practices by AB InBev ([1]) and Mondelez ([2]) in the beer, and biscuits, chocolate and coffee sectors, respectively, and cartels in the canned vegetables ([3]) and food delivery services sectors ([4]).

It also investigated the practices of two European retail alliances AgeCore and Coopernic and their members and found no evidence of anticompetitive effects stemming from joint negotiations but rather benefits for consumers in terms of lower prices ([5]). The Commission is currently investigating the chocolate confectionery ([6]), non-alcoholic drinks ([7]), personal care ([8]) and salmon sectors ([9]).

([1]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_19_2488.
([2]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_2727.
([3]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_19_5911.
([4]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1356.
([5]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/mex_23_3847.
([6]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_802.
([7]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/it/ip_25_2671/IP_25_2671_EN.pdf and https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_737.
([8]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_737.
([9]) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_405.

In the Single Market Strategy adopted in May 2025 ([10]), the Commission has committed to developing tools to address unjustified Territorial Supply Constraints (TSCs) also in cases falling outside the scope of competition law. The Commission is carrying out a thorough impact assessment and consultations ([11]) to present the most appropriate tools.

([10]) https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/single-market/strategy_en.

([11]) https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/15252-Single-market-tackling-unjustified-territorial-supply-constraints/public-consultation_en.