

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-002567/24
to the Commission
Laurent Castillo (PPE)
(18 November 2024)**

Subject: Health controls on food products imported under trade agreements, in particular the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement

Since 1981, the EU has had a ban, applicable to both Member States and imports from third countries, on the use of hormones to stimulate growth in farmed animals, including oestradiol. However, a Commission audit revealed that Brazil cannot guarantee that its beef exports have not been treated with oestradiol 17 β . Thus, despite being carcinogenic, that growth hormone has been found in products consumed by Europeans.

This example illustrates not only the risk that the EU-Mercosur Agreement poses to the health of EU citizens, but also the unfair competition it appears to create for our farmers: almost 30% of pesticides authorised in Brazil and Argentina are banned in the EU.

What measures does the Commission intend to take, with a view to protecting European consumers, to step up health checks on imported food products?

Submitted: 18.11.2024

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(27 March 2025)**

All food products in the EU, domestic or imported, must comply with EU food safety rules. These are not negotiable, and hence not subject to negotiations on trade agreements, including the EU-Mercosur.

Third countries wishing to export food products to the EU are responsible for ensuring these are hormone-free and must establish control systems ensuring compliance with EU food safety rules. Brazil's system is regularly audited by the EU.

In audit 2024-8087 ⁽¹⁾, the Commission concluded that Brazil should improve its system to ensure that meat of bovine animals treated with the 17 β oestradiol hormone (17 β) for therapeutic or zootechnical purposes is not exported to the EU and made a recommendation.

Brazil confirmed that only meat from male bovine animals would be exported to the EU until the necessary guarantees are in place to ensure that the meat of female bovine animals was not treated with 17 β .

The Commission is following up closely the actions taken by the Brazilian authorities set out in the recommendations of the above-mentioned audit. Recently, Brazil's Minister of Agriculture and Livestock reaffirmed their commitment to comply with these requirements.

Brazilian beef, like other imported meat, is subject to analysis in the EU for hormonal growth promotants. To date, no evidence has shown that beef of animals treated with 17 β has been placed on the EU market.

The Commission regularly carries out audits in third countries, works closely with Member States' veterinary authorities that perform controls on food imported into the EU and takes actions in agreement with Member States when needed.

It considers that sanitary checks on imported goods ensure a satisfactory level of health risk prevention, including for food imported from Mercosur.

⁽¹⁾ Food Audits and Analysis, Brazil 2024-8087 <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report/details/4804>