

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-004180/25
to the Commission
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)
(23 October 2025)**

Subject: Impact of sheep and goat pox vaccination on feta cheese exports and the country's health status

The recent outbreak of sheep and goat pox in the EU is causing concern among milk and feta cheese producers, particularly in Greece.

According to the Animal Health Code of the World Organisation for Animal Health, countries that apply vaccination can regain 'free country' status within six months of the last case, provided that eradication measures are in place. However, in the livestock world, there is a perception that vaccination marks a country as endemic for many years, creating serious barriers to trade, even for products such as PDO feta cheese.

Given that:

feta can be produced from both pasteurised and unpasteurised milk,

pasteurised dairy products are considered safe when properly processed,

the export market is a crucial pillar for the feta and sheep and goat sectors in Greece,

Can the Commission clarify:

1. What is the current legal and health framework in the EU regarding the vaccination of sheep and goats against smallpox and the recovery of 'free country' status?
2. Does vaccination result in long-term restrictions on the export of milk and cheese, and in particular PDO feta, or are there only temporary restrictions that are lifted after specific deadlines and under certain conditions?
3. What measures does the Commission intend to take to ensure timely and clear information for producers and to avoid creating confusion that undermines confidence in exports?

Submitted: 23.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(19 November 2025)**

Vaccination in the EU against sheep and goat pox (SGP) is regulated under Regulation (EU) 2016/429 ⁽¹⁾ and Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/361 ⁽²⁾.

The Member States vaccination plans must comply with these rules. Any temporary restrictions to intra-EU trade due to SGP outbreaks or vaccination, including risk mitigation measures enabling safe trade (e.g. milk heat treatment) and their duration, are defined in relevant EU rules adopted under the EU animal health legal framework.

These rules are being updated and a new Annex to Regulation (EU) 2023/361 on SGP is being developed to specify risk mitigating measures and their duration for milk and milk products ⁽³⁾.

Meanwhile if a Member State decides to vaccinate, the Commission will adopt a decision establishing risk mitigating measures in line with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) ⁽⁴⁾ international standards and based on the treatments provided under Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 ⁽⁵⁾. All measures and restrictions will be lifted as soon as the country demonstrates absence of virus circulation.

The Commission maintains regular contact with Member States through the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed with information publicly available on its website ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/429/oj>.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 52, 20.2.2023, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2023/361/oj.

⁽³⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-health/expert-group-animal-health_en.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.woah.org/en/home/>.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 174, 3.6.2020, pp. 64-139, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/687/oj.

⁽⁶⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/committees/paff-committees/animal-health-and-welfare_en.

Furthermore, it regularly shares updates on the epidemiological situation, the animal health legislation, its amendments and implementation with third countries via information notes, and with stakeholders during the meetings of the Animal Health Advisory Committee ⁽⁷⁾ and the civil dialogue group for animal production ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-health/animal-health-advisory-committee_en.

⁽⁸⁾ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/committees-and-expert-groups/civil-dialogue-groups_en.