(English version)

Priority question for written answer P-001423/26
to the Commission
Sander Smit (ECR)
(8 April 2026)

Subject: Need to address the fertiliser shortage

The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has driven up fertiliser prices worldwide. Even if the situation de-escalates, prices will remain structurally high due to higher energy prices, import duties, the phasing out of free ETS allowances and the CBAM. This translates into higher food prices and a weakened competitive position for EU farms. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the livestock manure limit of 170 kg N/ha per year in nitrate vulnerable zones forces farms to purchase additional fertiliser, namely the very the product that has now become astronomically expensive,

while also having to dispose of livestock manure at higher costs.

1. Will the Commission therefore undertake an urgent review of the outdated Nitrates Directive, including the livestock manure limit of 170 kg N/ha per year in nitrate vulnerable zones, in order to provide a lasting solution to the fertiliser shortage in the Union and prevent lower crop yields?

2. Is the Commission prepared to suspend the ETS for the fertiliser sector, or at least to suspend the phasing out of free ETS emission allowances for sectors, given the consequences for, amongst other things, fertiliser production and the knock-on effect on the production costs of EU farms and food prices?

3. In its impact assessment, has the Commission taken sufficient account of the impact of the ETS phase-out and the CBAM on the production costs of EU farms and on food security in crisis situations such as those currently unfolding?

Submitted: 8.4.2026

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(6 May 2026)

The Commission has announced a fertiliser action plan to be adopted in 2026 outlining short- and long-term measures to ensure the availability and affordability of fertilisers, as a response to the geopolitical situation and the volatility in fertiliser prices, and to address structural issues in the fertiliser and agricultural sectors.

In this context, the Commission is assessing all available options to address the crisis. As regards the Nitrates Directive ([1]), the Commission is also currently finalising its evaluation and will decide on any follow-up in light of the evaluation findings. The Commission already amended the directive ([2]) to provide flexibility for certain types of materials derived from manure processing.

The Commission has already taken targeted measures, including a reduced mark-up of 1% applied to the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) ([3]) default values for fertilisers and proposed duty-free tariff rate quotas for certain fertilisers.

As regards the Emissions Trading System (ETS), the Commission intends to propose a revision of the system to modernise it, while enhancing tools to support industries such as the fertiliser sector to decarbonise and remain competitive.

The Impact Assessment for the revision of the ETS Directive ([4]) is analysing the impact of potential measures to address the risk of carbon leakage, as well as measures for supporting the decarbonisation of industry ([5]).

As part of this process, the Commission will take fully into account the provisions relevant to carbon leakage in the amendment to the Climate Law.

The CBAM impact assessment of 2021 has assessed the impacts of its introduction including on trade flows, competitiveness, gross domestic product, and carbon leakage rates.

([1]) Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources, OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1-8.
([2]) Commission Directive (EU) 2026/288 of 9 February 2026 amending Council Directive 91/676/EEC as regards the use of certain fertilising materials from livestock manure, OJ L, 2026/288, 10.2.2026.
([3]) https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/carbon-border-adjustment-mechanism_en.
([4]) Directive (EU) 2023/959 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 amending Directive 2003/87/EC establishing a system for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Union and Decision (EU) 2015/1814 concerning the establishment and operation of a market stability reserve for the Union greenhouse gas emission trading, OJ L 130, 16.5.2023, pp. 134-202.
([5]) Via the Innovation Fund (https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/innovation-fund_en) or the Industrial Decarbonisation Bank (https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/industry/sustainability/net-zero-industry-act/net-zero-navigator/list-instruments/industrial-decarbonisation-bank_en).