

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001532/26
to the Commission
Paulo do Nascimento Cabral (PPE)
(15 April 2026)**

Subject: Impact of suspending inward processing in the sugar sector on jobs and consumers in Portugal, Spain and Italy

Given the sustained growth in EU beet sugar production over the past two years and the resulting market oversupply, consideration is being given to the possible suspension of inward processing arrangements (IPR) in the sugar sector.

Cane refineries in Portugal, Spain and Italy rely on IPR to access raw cane sugar. It is unlikely that those factories will be able to replace IPR with another source of raw cane sugar without paying significant — and unaffordable — import duties. Moreover, cane refining volumes have declined over the past two years while beet sugar production has increased, indicating that cane refiners have not contributed to the current market imbalance.

In the light of this situation:

1. Has the Commission conducted any assessment regarding the impact on local economies in Portugal, Spain and Italy of restricting cane refineries' access to raw materials, particularly given the refineries' role as regional employers?
2. Given that domestic beet sugar production in these countries is limited, how does the Commission intend to safeguard consumer supply if they become dependent on surplus production from northern Europe, especially in years of low yields, when producers may prioritise domestic markets, as happened in 2022?

Submitted: 15.4.2026

**Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(26 May 2026)**

1. The Commission recognises the importance of cane sugar refiners in ensuring a sufficient supply of sugar to the EU market and their role in supporting the local economy and employment. As recommended by the High-Level Group on Sugar ⁽¹⁾, the Commission seeks to preserve balance between the interests of beet sugar producers and the EU cane sugar refineries. This is reflected, for example, in trade negotiations, where the Commission aims to take into account the interests of both sectors. In line with this approach, recent agreements with Mercosur and Australia include duty free tariff rate quotas (TRQs) for the import of raw sugar, enabling refiners to access competitive raw cane sugar on the global market.
2. Compared to marketing year 2022/23, 2026/27 production and carry-over stocks are projected to be significantly higher, which means that even with a lower European beet sugar production in the upcoming marketing year, sufficient sugar is expected to be available to supply the whole EU market. In addition, the suspension of inward processing is considered for a limited time and with a review clause. During this time, refiners have access to raw cane sugar from origins that have preferential access to the EU market to supply their local markets. TRQs under existing free trade agreements and international obligations offer the possibility to import above 700 000 tonnes against reduced duty and 530 000 tonnes duty free. Apart from TRQs, raw cane sugar can be imported duty free and quota free from countries that have an Economic Partnership Agreement or fall under the 'Everything but Arms' scheme.

⁽¹⁾ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2019-07/final-report-high-level-group-meeting-sugar_0.pdf.