

European Commission's statement on production standards applied to imported agri-food products and SPS controls

In the Vision for Agriculture and Food, the Commission announced its plans to pursue a stronger alignment of production standards applied to imported products, notably on animal welfare and pesticides.

On pesticides, the Vision includes the principle that the most hazardous pesticides banned in the EU for health and environmental reasons should not be allowed back to the EU through imported products thus aiming to avoid a competitive disadvantage for EU farmers and the agri-food sector while responding to consumers' expectations. To move this forward, the Commission has launched a study on 25 November to prepare an impact assessment that will consider the impacts of this approach. In light of the results, and, if appropriate the Commission will propose amendments to the applicable legal framework. The preliminary study is expected to be concluded by summer 2026, and the next steps of the impact assessment will follow. While the EU's existing legislation already protects consumers and ensures all food placed on the market meets our high health and safety standards, the Commission remains committed to pursue closer alignment of production standards that apply to imported products, ensuring a level playing field for our farmers and producers and maintaining consumer protection.

In the meantime, the Commission has proposed under the Food and Safety Simplification Package proposal of 16 December to amend the current legislation to provide that, for substances that are not approved in the Union and that have certain particularly hazardous properties, Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) may be set at zero if considered appropriate following the outcome of an impact assessment.

On animal welfare, the Commission has concluded on 17 December a public consultation on the revision of EU legislation for on-farm animal welfare for certain animals, including on whether and to what extent equivalent animal welfare standards should apply to imports of animals and animal products. Following the impact assessment, the Commission will proceed with relevant proposals.

Regarding import controls, the Commission announced on 9 December plans to step up and improve the audits carried out directly on the ground in all third countries, including food imports coming from Mercosur countries. The Commission will increase its export related audits in non-EU countries by 50% over the next 2 years, starting from 1 January 2026. The Commission will also step up the monitoring of non-compliant commodities and countries and adapt the frequency of checks to those accordingly. Additionally, the Commission will strengthen the level of controls within the EU, namely at the main entry points. In this regard, the Commission will perform a higher number of checks in Member States, to ensure that controls at the borders comply fully with EU standards, providing support Member States to properly carry out these checks. The Commission will set up a dedicated EU Task Force to make import controls more efficient, which will focus in particular on pesticide residues, food and feed safety and animal welfare and will consider coordinated EU monitoring action on imported products.