

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
18 MARCH 2026
HEARING IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE (AGRI)**

Agenda: Exchange of views with the Commission on the state of play of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement - https://redmapl3.europarl.europa.eu/RedmapFront/media/reds_iCmOj/AGRI-OJ-2026-03-18-1/AGRI-OJ-2026-03-18-1_en.pdf

Video:

https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/agri-committee-meeting_20260318-0900-COMMITTEE-AGR

Speakers: Veronika Vrecionová, Carmen Crespo Diaz, Dario Nardella, Mireia Borrás Pabón, Elsi Katainen, Thomas Waitz, Lynn Boylan, Ivan David, Gabriel Mato, Gilles Penelle, Maria Grapini, Jérémy Decerle, Daniel Buda, Cristina Guarda

For the European Commission: Matthias Petschke (EU Commission, DG TAXUD, Director Customs (TAXUD A)) and Brigitte Misonne (EU Commission, DG AGRI, Deputy Director-General)

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“Our first item of the agenda is an exchange of views with the Commission on the state of play of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement, in particular the Agreement of the 3rd of October 2025 concerning agriculture trade. In October last year, the EU and Morocco signed an exchange of letters amending their agriculture agreement under the framework of the EU-Morocco Association Agreement. The arrangement entered into provisional application pending approval by the EU institutions and the Moroccan authorities.

Today's exchange will give us the opportunity to hear from the Commission on the current state of play, including the legal and practical implications of the provisional application of Protocol 1 of the Tariffs Preferences for Agriculture and Fisheries Products and Protocol 4 on the rule of origin as well as the next step envisaged. I would therefore like to welcome the Commission representative, Mr. Matthias Petschke from DG TAXUD and Brigitte Misonne from DG AGRI, who will present the latest developments for four minutes each. So I would like to first ask Mr. Matthias Petschke for your presentation. You have four minutes.”

Matthias Petschke (EU Commission, DG TAXUD, Director Customs (TAXUD A))

“Thank you very much, Chair. I would like to thank this Committee and the honourable members here today for calling this meeting, which gives the Commission, in particular DG TAXUD and a colleague from DG AGRI, an opportunity to engage with the members of this Committee on the new agreement with Morocco concerning the preferential treatment of products originating in Western Sahara. As you are aware, as just mentioned, on the 2nd of October last year, the Council adopted the decision to sign and provisionally apply the new agreement negotiated by the Commission.

And this agreement was then subsequently signed on the 3rd of October and provisional application began on that same day. Before continuing on the state of play of the legislative procedure, I must first clarify a very important matter, which is the scope of the agreement. The agreement in question is not an agricultural agreement. It is an agreement on tariff preferences for products originating in Western Sahara. These preferential tariffs apply to all goods, not just agricultural products. In fact, agricultural products only represent around one third of all products imported into the EU from Western Sahara.

The vast majority of the products imported into the EU from this territory are, in fact, fisheries products, which make up the bulk of those imports in terms of volume and value. In actual figures, for example, in 22 out of some 203 million tonnes of products imported from Western Sahara, 129 million tonnes were fisheries products such as canned sardines, and 74 million tonnes were agricultural products, namely tomatoes and melons. Moreover, it is

important to highlight that the 2025 agreement does not change the preferential treatment granted to agricultural products as compared to the older, the 2018 agreement.

We understand that there has been particular concern with regard to the importation of tomatoes from Western Sahara. To provide some perspective, again, the reference year 22, the EU imported a total of roughly 800,000 tonnes of tomatoes. From Western Sahara, the EU imported slightly below 70,000 tonnes, which equates to be exact 8.2 percent of total EU tomato imports in volume. Most tomatoes consumed in the EU are also produced in the EU.

Coming back to the legislative process, the next phase of the legislative process is the transmission from Council to Parliament of the Commission proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the agreement. However, the exact timeline of this process is not in the remit of the Commission, as this is a Council procedure.

Some words about the implementation of the new agreement. As mentioned, the new agreement is applied on a provisional basis by the EU and by Morocco since the 3rd of October 2025, and since then the Commission has been monitoring the implementation of the agreement, both in terms of customs procedures and labelling requirements. As this Committee is no doubt aware, to benefit from preferential tariff treatment under the new agreement, the goods must be accompanied by a certificate of origin or a declaration of origin. Under the terms of the agreement, the proof of origin for Western Sahara products must attest to the relevant region of origin of the goods, either Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra or Dakhla-Oued Eddahab.

Now, we are aware of a number of inconsistencies in the data that is shown in the Customs Surveillance System and reflected also in DG AGRI's data portal. Customs surveillance data of tomatoes imported from Morocco and Western Sahara since September 25 is incomplete and, as a consequence, appear to indicate a very significant fall in imports.

In reality, as per official Eurostat data, tomato imports from Morocco and Western Sahara are showing a small reduction in comparison to prior seasons. That reduction in imports is consistent with information available concerning a smaller harvest. The European Commission is investigating the inconsistencies in imports data declared by some member states through the Customs Surveillance System and is in regular contact with the relevant customs authorities to resolve the issue.

Also to be noted that DG TAXUD has opened some infringements in 25 with respect to various member states that are not sharing a complete data set with the Commission, contrary to what is required in accordance with the Union Customs Code and its related secondary legislation. To be noted that these procedures are related to the overall reporting of data by those member states and not specifically to the Western Sahara issue. We can assure you that we are doing everything we can to resolve this technical issue, which is actually a reporting issue, so as to ensure that fully transparent data is made publicly available in our surveillance system and on the AGRI information portal.

As I said, this issue is not impacting the official statistics of Eurostat. Thank you very much for your attention."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Thank you, sir. And now I would like to give the floor to Madame Brigitte Misonne, again for four minutes. Please, Madame."

Brigitte Misonne (EU Commission, DG AGRI, Deputy Director-General):

"Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Honourable Members of Parliament. I will just dig a bit more into the agricultural parts, but a lot has been said already, so I'll try to be brief.

So, as you know, under the 2012 EU-Morocco agreement on reciprocal liberalisation measures on agricultural products, processed agricultural products and fish and fishery products, both Morocco and the EU benefit from preferential market access. As regards agri-food trade, the agreement has been beneficial for EU exports to Morocco. And since 2022, the EU has enjoyed a modest trade surplus in agricultural products, mostly due to wheat exports.

Both Moroccan fruits and vegetables are imported into the EU under preferential treatment. Only a limited number of products, mostly tomatoes, garlic, cucumbers, courgettes, clementines and strawberries, benefit from preferential tariff quotas. Beyond quotas, tariffs apply either at a reduced level, which is the case for tomatoes, with a 60% reduction, or at ordinary tariffs applying to all third countries.

The Commission is, of course, regularly monitoring the market situation. Turning now to specifically Western Sahara, the 2018 agreement, now replaced by the new 2025 agreement, extended tariff preferences to products originating in Western Sahara, including agricultural products. The new agreement, and this is important, covers the same scope.

All goods originating in Western Sahara that are under the control of the Moroccan customs authorities benefit from tariff preferences applied under the EU-Morocco Association Agreement. The 2025 agreement does not contain any new trade concession, neither for products originating in Western Sahara nor for those originating in Morocco.

The important novelty concerns the indication of the origin on fruit and vegetables to meet the conditions set by the Court in its ruling of 4 October 2024. The Court ruling referred to the need for clear identification of products originating in Western Sahara, which should be distinct from those of Morocco's origin. The new agreement contains the necessary elements to identify the origin of Western Sahara products in the proof of origin and for fruit and vegetables marketed in the EU on the labels. The names of the regions of Western Sahara to be used by operators are, as you know, Dakhla-Oued Eddahab and Laayoune-Sakia El Hamra.

The agreement provides for a clear distinction between agricultural products originating in Morocco that will continue to bear Morocco as a country of origin, and agricultural products originating in Western Sahara that will bear the name of the region within Western Sahara where they originate from. This is a considerable improvement in terms of information to consumers that will receive verifiable information.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“I'm sorry, I have interrupted you. Please slow down a little bit because of interpreter's ask. Thank you.”

Brigitte Misonne:

“Sorry, and my apologies to the interpreters. This aspect of the agreement required adopting new rules for the specific case of fruit and vegetables originating in Western Sahara regions.

For this purpose, the Commission adopted a delegated regulation on the 16th of October, which after your scrutiny and that of the Council, was published on the 22nd December 2025 and entered into force the day after, with retroactive application from the 4th of October.

The new agreement also allows the possibility for the EU to authorise Moroccan authorities to issue conformity checks and certificates for fruits and vegetables originating in Western Sahara, attesting that the product complies with EU marketing standards, including rules on the indication of the origin on the label. Following a formal request from Morocco, the Commission is currently examining the possibility to authorise Moroccan authorities to issue those conformity certificates.

Let me conclude by saying that trade relations are an important part of the strategic partnership with Morocco to which the EU attaches high value. Many thanks.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“Thank you, Madam. And let's start with coordinators now. You have two minutes each and first EPP, Carmen Crespo-Diaz, you have two minutes.”

Carmen Crespo Diaz (EPP, Spain) (original in Spanish, transcript of EP translation):

“Thank you very much and thank you so much to the Commission for that information. Although, you know, in this committee, when it comes to this agreement, you know, it's been very opaque from the get-go and there's not been much transparency. But still, the first speaker from the Commission said something very clearly, namely that you're going to be exchanging fish for tomatoes.

And, of course, that has an important impact. You know, we need to have an agreement that is beneficial for our fishers and, of course, also for our farmers. We need both.

And therefore, you know, I think the data speak for themselves. 18% you talked about in terms of tomatoes and you talked about a domino effect with regard to other farm produce. And that's quite astonishing.

I mean, in Spain, for instance, tomatoes dropped by 25%. And in addition to that, we've seen an increase for Morocco by 42% vis-à-vis the EU. You know, we're talking about a 42% increase if you look at the figures in one year only.

So, yes, clearly, there is more pressure being brought to bear. And logically, that does have a domino effect on other farm produce. As for European farmers, you know, what about them?

You know, they've got checks. Are we checking what's coming in? Are we looking at the customs tariffs, you know, the 80,000 tonnes or whatever that's coming in? We have the data on that.

But in particular, we also need to be very clear about the labelling, the identification. We need, you know, the regions, not the countries. Now, the Treaty of the European Union talks about identification of countries. That has to be in the label. And it's not so much the regions. And again, I'm bearing in mind the CJEU ruling.

So, there's also the question of funding by the European Union when it comes to investments, investments into this area, into this zone, which means that we don't really have much to, you know, in terms of helping out the south of Europe. What about supporting our farmers? Surely, we need to support our farmers in order to rebalance things, for instance, in terms of water. The region needs our support. So, I'm afraid it's not very transparent. It's not very balanced. And therefore, as things stand, we would not be in agreement with this text, you know, in terms of our market, in terms of farm produce, in terms of controls and checks. And there are real difficulties for our own farmers, difficulties that are generated by this agreement.

So, I think that we need to look towards the future and we need to work this afternoon with the Commissioner on this point. We really need to dig deep into this and we need to have an agreement that's better than this for the sake of our farmers. Thank you."

Dario Nardella (S&D, Italy) (original in Italian, transcript of EP translation):

"This free trade agreement represents an emblematic case in terms of how we should assess the European Union's trade policy, not just in terms of volumes traded, but also in terms of the social impact as well as the regional environmental impact when it comes to our international relations. The shift in Morocco towards trade liberalisation began with the association agreement with the EU in the year 2000. And there have been some macroeconomic results of this. The amount of trade in the country's GDP has increased in some sectors.

However, if we look in greater depth, we can see a different picture. Next to large exporting groups which are fully integrated into global value chains, the main part of the Moroccan agricultural sector is made up of small scale farming. And they represent most of the labour force in rural areas. And they haven't really benefited in the same way as others from trade liberalisation. This imbalance is not just about Morocco, it's also about our side as well, because our trading agreements have to be assessed in terms of their economic advantages, but also in terms of their ability to promote a balanced development and fair conditions for competition.

How does the commission then intend to more effectively monitor the impact on the parts of the European agricultural system which are most exposed to the results of this agreement, but also in terms of what's going on in agriculture in Morocco? There are serious imbalances there as well. It's important that we have agreements which are not just focused on opening up markets, but also into a focus on sustainable development, which will help people on both sides and also protect productive systems in the European Union on its member states. Thank you."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Okay, thank you very much. And the Patriots, Madam Borrás Pabón. Mireia, you have the floor."

Mireia Borrás Pabón (P/E, Spain):

"Thank you very much, Madam Chair. So, first of all, I would note that what's happening more and more is that we have to drag the Commission in order to get information on this agreement with Morocco. The Commission and Council seem to be deciding on the provisional application of these trade agreements between the EU and other partners, and they don't even inform the Parliament.

Here we're talking about Morocco, but look at what happened with Mercosur. At the end of the day, an agreement here, an agreement there, more or less. Either way, this Parliament is being usurped, if you like.

We have our own powers when it comes to fiscal matters, when it comes to trade agreements. All of that, you're riding roughshod over, and you're trying to avoid circumvent us. We're talking about six months, I think now, since the request for provisional application of this agreement with Morocco by the Commission. Six months have gone by, and basically, during that time, there was no democratic input.

We've also seen the influx of agricultural produce, and the European Parliament didn't have a word to say about it. We're talking about really big volumes, thousands and thousands of kilogrammes of agricultural produce.

We don't know the exact amount because nobody's telling us. So basically, a blackout in terms of democracy, I'm afraid, during that whole period, and also information blackout. In addition to that, it's impossible for us to know exactly the volume of tomatoes arriving on our markets.

Also, when it comes to Almeria, for instance, in Spain, tomato production has gone down by 30 percent, more than 30 percent, but imports from Morocco have continued to increase and increase consistently. So we're talking about an association agreement with Morocco. I would turn to the Commission and say, be careful.

You're negotiating an agreement with Morocco in record time in order to basically, I think, disregard a ruling by the CJEU. Look at the text of the ruling. We listen to the Commission representative. It's supposed to say Western Sahara. It's not supposed to mention a region within the Sahara area. It's supposed to say Western Sahara. That is what the CJEU ruling says quite clearly. So we need to be careful about labelling. We need to make sure that this agreement really falls in line with our legal framework and with our legal requirements.

Also, we need to look towards Council. We need to make sure that the European Parliament has an opportunity to speak to the content of this agreement. So information, statistics, et cetera. We need all of this information.

Now, let me put four questions very quickly, and I will conclude after that. I want to make sure that responsibilities are not avoided, so to speak, circumvented.

First of all..."

Chair:

"Thank you. It's a question of timing. So Wiesner is not there. In this case, I ask Elsi Katainen, please."

Elsi Katainen (Renew, Finland):

"Okay, thank you, Chair. The situation with EU-Morocco Association agreement remains very complex and controversial. As we all know, there has been significant legal and political challenges on the regional dispute over self-governing territory of Western Sahara.

The objection from last autumn proves that it is difficult to find a solution to these territory disputes which would be in favour of all people involved, producers, consumers, governments, and people of Western Sahara region. What I wanted to enquire about the state of play of this agreement is how we will solve this dispute, find a solution that suits all the people, and make sure these kind of disputes won't raise up again in the future. Another important aspect is to highlight when it comes to agreements is that regardless of the situation we are right now, we need to make sure that the standards are equal to all.

We cannot accept double standards that could undermine our local production in Europe. This is something what we need to keep in mind when it comes to association agreement and trade agreements overall, how we ensure the level playing field for European farmers. Thank you."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Thank you, Elsi. Thomas Waitz."

Thomas Waitz (Greens, Austria):

"Thank you, Chair. Many things have said and it's a rare moment of relative unity here in the Agri-Committee beyond the political forces. I mean, I have some very concrete questions to the Commission.

Did you read the court verdict from 2019 from the European Court of Justice? Are you intending to take it anyhow serious? Can you please explain us how you were fulfilling the conditions that Saharawi people are generally involved into the negotiation process? Has that happened? And can you tell us how Saharawi people will profit economically from this trade agreement? And are you ready to accept that naming regions is not fulfilling neither EU legislation nor the court verdict?

And with what, I don't know, legal backing, are you actually daring to come forward with once again a trade agreement that is against international law and that is against a court verdict of European Court of Justice? We have been telling, and I've been here sitting in this Committee, we've been telling you in the first round that this trade agreement is not fulfilling international law standards and you were ignoring it. And then the Court ruling was proving it again.

And again, you seem to ignore it. I mean, look, if we treat our rule of law internally, the European Union like that, look, I'm very engaged in enlargement. How can I tell Balkan countries to follow rule of law if we ignore court verdicts of the Court of Justice and if we ignore international law?

Really, seriously. I mean, this is undermining our credibility and this is undermining our legal, you know, the legal certainty that also businesses expect from us. I don't know what else to say.

I mean, I have this debate now since how many years, I don't know, but I don't think we can move forward like this. Please give some concrete answers to my very concrete questions.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“Thank you. And The Left, Lynn Boylan.”

Lynn Boylan (The Left, Ireland):

“Thank you, Chair. And I think it's important to note that, you know, when you hear such consensus in the Committee, which I'm sure doesn't happen very often in the Agricultural Committee, it's also worth noting that only 188 MEPs voted in favour of this proposal when it came to plenary. And that's because people aren't believing what the Commission is trying to sell us, that this actually complies with the court ruling.

And I am going to be very specific in setting out how it doesn't comply, because the court ruling clearly said that the territory of Western Sahara must be regarded as a customs territory for the purposes of Article 60 of the Union Customs Code, and consequently of Regulation No. 1308, 2013, and implementing Regulation No. 543, 2011.

Accordingly, the indication of the country of origin which must appear on the goods at issue in the main proceedings may designate only Western Sahara as such, because those goods are harvested in that territory. That is pretty unequivocal, I think, how the Commission can deny how equivocal it is.

Paragraph 88 of the ruling also is unequivocal. It says any other indication would be deceptive for the purposes of the case law referred to in paragraph 73 of the present judgement, as it could mislead consumers as to the true origin of the goods at issue in the main proceedings, inasmuch as it would be likely to suggest that those goods originate from a place other than the territory in which they were harvested.

So I don't think the court could be any clearer, and it is very frustrating that we have yet to get any proper answers from the Commission in relation to this, because not only is it not upholding international law and damaging the credibility of the institutions, but it is also deliberately misleading customers, because no consumer could be expected to know what these regions stand for, where these products have come from.

So I'd like to ask the Commission colleagues to outline the legal advice that was tendered to them before adopting this delegated act. There are now two new court cases that have been launched, again calling into question the credibility of the institutions. So I think that the Commission must recognise the legal situation.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“I'm sorry, my interpreters ask you to slow down a little bit.”

Lynn Boylan:

“Sorry, so I think I'm trying to get into the time, but I think the Commission must recognise the legal situation. So we would like to see their legal advice that is telling them that what they're trying to do is in compliance with the court ruling.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“Thank you. And the last coordinator is Ivan David.”

Ivan David (ESN, Czechia):

“I will speak Czech. I think we have to focus on the general aspect of the matter. It is the repetitive issue in agreements with countries that are mostly agricultural, and there is a chance to export industrial products there. Some of these countries are agricultural powers, superpowers.

So who benefits and who is the victim of such agreements? It is certainly not beneficial for farmers and for agriculture. There should be standard instruments for regulation, customs duties, or amounts or quantities that can be imported, quality controls.

But this is not happening, of course. So the winners are retail chains. Of course, for them, it's profitable to import at low prices all year long, at the same quality, and it is good for some industrial producers.

And what is the problem in general? The commission expresses their satisfaction over an agreement that was done, but the Commission pretends that it is not responsible for the situation. The Commission, that is, officials, administrators, who should compare the real reality against a desirable outcome, but that has not happened because the desirable outcome that was included in the judgement.

This arrangement will always disadvantage weaker producers. So we are dogs that are barking, but the caravan continues. It goes on, because officials are not responsible."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Now I would like to give the floor to INTA standing reporter for two minutes. It's again Madame Lynn Boylan, so I don't know if you want to take the floor again."

Lynn Boylan:

"Thank you, I will take the floor, I'll take the opportunity because I have lots of questions, and I'll speak slowly. And I thank the AGRI committee for the invitation to participate as the standing rapporteur for the Maghreb region.

I do note that the Confederation Paysanne have expressed concern that imports of tomatoes from Morocco and Western Sahara have disappeared from the official statistics of the European Commission. And we know, as other colleagues have said, that European tomato farmers have been facing unfair competition and the lack of available data since the very dubious labelling regime was adopted is highly concerning. So my question for the Commission is, can they outline when information regarding imports will be published again?

And secondly, I want to ask about progress on the referral of this agreement to Parliament for our consent. So while the INTA Committee will be the lead committee, it will of course be of interest to AGRI colleagues to be able to scrutinise the amendments proposed to the agreement. The amended agreement has been in provisional application since October, and yet we have still not had a referral six months later, so this is completely unacceptable. Can the Commission explain what the delay is and what they are doing to ensure that we can do our jobs that we were elected for to scrutinise this agreement?

And I'll also just finish, I suppose, on a political point. The amended agreement comes from a Court ruling where the court clearly found that the agreement the Commission negotiated was unlawful. The Commission then proposed an amended agreement mere days before the court's stay was due to expire, and the European Parliament was not kept informed throughout this process, and now we have the Commission essentially telling us that trust us, it will be fine.

So I would respectfully suggest that the Commission's poor record on this issue doesn't inspire confidence, and I thank the AGRI colleagues for this exchange today and facilitating this discussion on a very important topic, which I'm sure we will return to."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Thank you. Madame, and now it's[inaudible]. I and their colleagues, you have one minute each. So first, colleague Mato."

Gabriel Mato (EPP, Spain):

"Muchas gracias, Presidenta. Thank you very much, Madame. Nobody doubts that trading relations between the European Union and Monaco are important, but what's also important are the effects that this might have on the EU farming sector.

The Commission was saying that this is not a farming agreement. Well, no, it isn't, but it has an amazing, significant impact on the sector. In recent years, fruit and veg farmers have expressed their concerns on many occasions to do with difficult competition situations to do with environmental and plant health rules. And then if you add the need for controls, checks on imports from Morocco and so on, things become difficult. The tomato production, and this is something that's well known in the Canary Islands, it's clear that this agreement is going to increase pressure on the sector. And then there's an additional concern to do with traceability, labelling, and the availability of transparent data on imports.

So I'd like to ask the Commission, what specific measures it intends to take in order to make sure that there is as much reciprocity as possible, and that there's fair competition, though there are fair competition conditions for our farmers."

Gilles Penelle (PFE, France):

"Thank you very much. We know the adverse effects of importing tomatoes and fruit and vegetables from Morocco on our farming sector.

What I would say, as others have said, is there are two main concerns with this agreement. First of all, there was no consultation with producers when it was put through. And then in recital 13, it said that once the agreement is signed, the EU will finance desalination in the area of concern.

So we are financing increases in exports from tomatoes, of tomatoes and fruit and vegetables towards the European Union, which will undermine the sectors in our countries. A few months ago, the European Union gave 15 million euros to South Africa, again to support the agricultural sector. So what we're seeing is the European Union financing the disappearance of our own sectors, which were of very high quality."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Thank you very much."

Maria Grapini (S&D, Romania):

"I have to say that after what we've heard from the European Commission, I'm somewhat confused. On the one hand, we're being told that we don't have the exact figures imports. That means we don't know what's coming into the internal market.

I don't understand how this could be. DG TAXUD is telling us that the Commission is monitoring imports in order to make sure that all of the certificates of origin are present. But then from DG AGRI, we're hearing that the Commission has authorised Morocco to establish the certificates itself.

So what kind of monitoring is actually taking place? Are we supposed to trust these certificates? It just seems to me that there is no guarantee that these products respect the conditions set out in our trade agreements.

I'm not sure we can protect a market by closing it, but we need to remember the importance of reciprocity in these agreements in order to make sure that everybody is working on the same lines."

Jérémy Decerle (Renew, France):

"Thank you very much, Madam. I would echo the comments made by a number of the members here today to do with this agreement.

Now, we'd particularly like to come back to the effect that this will have on our tomato producers in the European Union. Since I've been a member of the Parliament, producers of tomatoes have been raising the alarm about this. What they're saying is that the standards they have to respect are not the same as those which Moroccan producers have to respect.

They should be the same. And the Commission tells us that the volumes imported into the European Union are relatively small and won't really have an adverse effect on the sector. But over the five years that we've been talking about this, the volumes of imports have been going up, and the effect on our tomato producing sector is quite clear.

We're producing fewer tomatoes, we have fewer producers as well, and we're being flooded with Moroccan tomatoes produced in conditions which are more favourable to the Moroccan producers. So the Commission needs to do something. We need to be able to compare exports and imports properly. We need to have the tools in order to make sure we can have proper reciprocity."

Daniel Buda (EPP, Romania):

"Thank you. I would ask the Commission to reply to two questions. First of all, the legislative aspects. If we respect the sentence handed down, as Mr Waitz was saying, I think the important thing here is that we don't have proper data on the quantities coming in. So how are we going to verify what's going on in the market if we don't have that data?

And then the certificates which accompany the products. These are issued by the exporting regions. But I'd like to know who carries out the checks on the spot.

The European Commission. Does the Commission have mechanisms to check that the production conditions are respected on the spot, or do they just base themselves on the certificates issued? And in terms of the quantities, if we don't have the proper data, we can't tell what's going on in the market.”

Cristina Guarda (The Greens/EFA, Italy):

“I admit that what we are faced with is the umpteenth systematic attempt to distort the Commission, the Court of Justice's ruling and also the Parliament's position. I mean, I could mention Mercosur, for example. The Commission seems to be able to do whatever it wants, but the ruling handed down is unequivocal. Western Sahara is a different area and the products have to be labelled as such. The amendment which was adopted provisionally, excluding the Parliament's role, allows for regional denominations which will deceive consumers. This is going to be problematic because it will lead to unfair competition with EU farmers.

Essentially, what we're seeing is something which will undermine the European Union's credibility when it comes to international law. So I'm wondering what kind of EU values we're putting forward when even we have a ruling which says that we are breaking international law, we're not doing anything about it. We're essentially continuing to colonise the southern hemisphere. We need to stop doing this.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“I would like again Mr Matthias Petschke, and you have 4 minutes for your remarks.”

Matthias Petschke:

“Thank you, Chair. There were a lot of questions. Let me start maybe with a question which came up several times on the missing data. The official trade data of the EU is provided by Eurostat, and this data is what can be considered the official state of trade interactions with partner countries. The custom surveillance system and data I was also referring to represents a real-time data source.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

I'm sorry, I have interrupted you because we don't have French interpretation. Please, if I can ask. No, because I don't know. Can you hear now? Okay, you can continue. Thank you, sir.”

Matthias Petschke:

“Okay, so referring to the custom surveillance data, this is real-time data which is provided for monitoring purposes by the member states. So first of all, to the question there is no monitoring. There is nothing really in terms of controls and verification.

Well, this data obviously is an important source enabling us to monitor, but obviously we need to check its completeness, and that is, as we see here, a potential issue. We have identified some discrepancies between the official data source, Eurostat, and the data of the commission surveillance system, and well, these inconsistencies, first of all, were identified in the data sent by certain member states, and there is currently a discussion taking place with the concerned member states in order to provide clarification. We are also providing support and assistance to these member states regarding the data quality concerns.

Member states may need some time for catching up and sending data not previously shared with the commission, notably if some updates of their customs digital system is needed. I have mentioned beforehand in my introduction the actual trade figures. The colleague from AGRI may have further information in this, and you see that especially if you compare last year with the year before, there is actually a reduction in quantity, even if there is a slight increase in value.

Now, with regard to the procedure, currently still pending at the level of the customs union group in the council, so this is, as I said, not in the remit of the commission, and you will have to hear from the council, and I take it that the council is currently also busy with a number of other things, maybe not least the work on the customs reform, but it's not for me to comment here. As regards the commission role, we are well aware of our obligation to inform the parliament as early as possible when we intend to propose legislation for provisional application and to inform the parliament of the reasons therefore, and during the first months of the year 25, there were several options that the commission was analysing, so we were still internally looking into the best way on how to renegotiate with Morocco, and among these options, we were looking also at an agreement option or instead to grant autonomous trade measures. The technical implication of these different options were discussed until summer, and then a political steer came only in mid-July, and the file evolved very quickly.

It should be noted that this was indeed an accelerated process which led to a successful negotiation and finalisation, first of all, of the internal analysis of the implications of the ruling, and obviously all this work was not done only by the negotiators, but it was done in concrete cooperation also with the legal services and their full involvement in the file with regard to the interpretation of the rulings. Each decision adopted by the commission and the council from mid-July to the 2nd of October was immediately transmitted to the European Parliament for the information of the members, and as I said, the process was admittedly accelerated, however, the parliament was reminded on the 23rd of September of the need for an accelerated timetable and for provisional application to be in place before the 4th October 2025. All legal and procedural requirements were fulfilled by that timeline in accordance with the inter-institutional agreement between the commission, the parliament, and the council.

I can also tell you that in the last four months, this is now the third time that I'm present in a meeting here in the parliament, providing answers, listening to the input from the members, and obviously making sure that this is duly reflected in our internal considerations. We are currently, as we speak, having a team on the place looking into the reality on the ground. Colleagues from AGRI and from my service, accompanied also by others, are there in order to make sure that we will be able to continue our reporting.

We have established in the past a tradition of very concrete reporting, and our aim is to continue this reporting in order to be able to show that there are concrete benefits resulting from this agreement in line with the court ruling. Thank you."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"Okay, thank you very much. No, no, I don't think that... I'm sorry?"

Thomas Waitz (Greens, Austria):

"Chair, the Commission has been reading out a prepared statement that has not answered a single question on the ECJ court ruling and the fulfilling, and this question has been asked in different ways by every single member of this room here. Can we please change the format to a, you know, ping-pong, because, you know, this is just ridiculously disrespectful to this Committee."

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

"I'm sorry. Thank you, Tomas. So, I..., I ask just now, Madame Brigitte Misonne."

Brigitte Misonne:

"Many thanks, Chair, and indeed, I was coming to that point. You certainly remember I was also with you in November, and we discussed this delegated regulation on the origin of fruit and vegetables coming from Western Sahara. The situation is the same as at that moment, so we have the court ruling, and as I told you at that time, we, of course, fully respect court rulings, and we implement them.

What is the difference between what you find in the words of the court ruling and what you find in the delegated regulation on origin labelling for fruit and vegetables? It's the fact that we mention the two regions and not the word Western Sahara. Why do we do that?

Because this delegated regulation has to be modified, because normally it provides for country of origin labelling, which means that until the amendment, products from those two regions of Western Sahara were identified as Morocco, we changed that, so it's no longer identified as Morocco, and that was the heart of the court ruling. So, now it is identified with the names of the two regions. So, that's the pragmatic and legal way we have found to implement the court ruling, and also to have Morocco on board to recognise, also in their legislation, because they had to change their legislation as well, that this is a territory with a particular status.

So, we have fulfilled our obligations there, as my colleague from DG TAXUD had mentioned, we have right now, while we are talking, we have colleagues on the ground checking the situation, checking how the Moroccan authorities are able to check the conformity of fruit and vegetables produced in Western Sahara with EU marketing standards, and it's only if that audit mission is successful that they will be authorised to issue those conformity certificates.

So, we have taken that very seriously, and we have taken all the steps that were necessary to make sure that we have a waterproof situation now. When it comes to EU farmers and the situation in the EU, in the fruit and vegetable sector, let me point at the very important support that we have under the Common Agricultural Policy via what we call sectoral programmes, where we have put and made available to EU farmers, EU producers of fruit and vegetables, the possibility to join forces and to market their products collectively, so that they have a better weight in the supply chain and can achieve a better value for their products. With regard to mirror closes, yes, we are

working on that, and we are trying to find ways that are of course compatible with our international obligations to increase the possibility, the areas where we can require that what we import matches the high levels of standards in the EU. Many thanks.”

Veronika Vrecionová (Chair, ECR, Czechia):

“Okay, thank you very much. So, we are in the end of this point, but I'm sure that we will continue because I am not sure that all my colleagues are satisfied with the answers from the Commission, so let's negotiate it in the future. Thank you very much, and now let's move, I'm sorry, here to the point number five.”