

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Directorate G – Veterinary and International Affairs  
Director

Brussels,  
SANTE/G7/JB/ak (2015) 6000632

Dear authors and supporters of the Petition,

**Subject: Import of horsemeat from non-EU Member States**

Thank you very much for the Petition that was signed by so many and sent to my Commissioner, and that had as subject the import of horsemeat from non-EU countries. As Director for Veterinary and International Affairs within the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, I am replying on behalf of the Commissioner.

With respect to the content of the Petition I would like to provide you with the following information. The European Union is the biggest importer of food and food products worldwide. The Union also has an open internal market so that food products can freely move throughout the EU. For these reasons, the European Commission, in close collaboration with the European Parliament and the Member States, have developed a strong and thorough import system that ensures the safety of imported food.

Below you will find a web link that explains the EU import rules and procedures in greater depth, but the basic principles are that imported food has to meet all the standards that apply in the EU and that the exporting country has to have an official system in place that should guarantee that exported products indeed meet these EU standards:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/international\\_affairs/trade/docs/im\\_cond\\_meat\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/international_affairs/trade/docs/im_cond_meat_en.pdf)

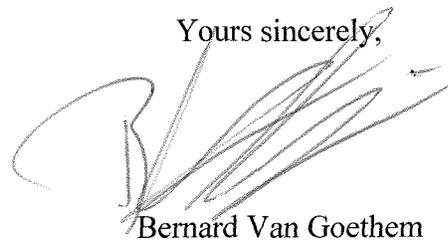
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With respect to the imports of horsemeat, the Commission regularly visits and inspects countries that export horsemeat, in order to verify whether the EU's import rules are systematically fulfilled. Possible findings that show improvements by these countries are addressed via official requests and the proper implementation of corrective actions by these countries, evaluated through follow up audits.

The European Commission wants to underline that the system described above ensures the safety of food imported to the EU, including that of horsemeat. It goes without saying though that the system requires continuous vigilance as further improvements are always to be considered. We therefore appreciate the efforts of the welfare organisations active in this field and acknowledge that this is supported by so many citizens of the EU.

In order to maximise the transparency of our work and of our communications, I would appreciate if *Humane Society International* would publish the reply of the European Commission to the Petition on its website as well.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernard Van Goethem', written over a light grey background.

Bernard Van Goethem