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Answer given by Ms Malmström
on behalf of the European Commission
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During the negotiation of major trade agreements, the European Commission carries out sustainability impact assessments to explore their potential economic, social and environmental impacts. The Commission has already published sustainability impact assessments for the future Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) with Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan¹. Moreover, the Commission will launch ex-post evaluations of the association agreements with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon in 2019. The impact of the elimination or reduction of import duties on goods, on the sector's added value and on reallocation of labour, is one of various parameters used to assess the impact of trade agreements on EU agriculture.

The Commission will continue to negotiate the approximation of production, health, safety and environmental standards within bilateral negotiations but also in a regional and multilateral context. The ongoing negotiations on asymmetric DCFTAs that favour our partner countries in that region however focus on gradual convergence of the partner countries' Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) system towards EU standards.

The reinforcement of EU plant health protection is well under way and will not be jeopardised by existing or future bilateral agreements. Within the partner countries' alignment towards EU standards, the setting up of early warning systems in cases of phytosanitary emergency should minimise the risk of importing plant diseases into the EU. In any case, products from the Southern Mediterranean partners just as from any third country must already comply with the EU's SPS standards to enter the EU market: the association agreements do not alter the EU's plant health import conditions.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/policy-making/analysis/policy-evaluation/sustainability-impact-assessments/index_en.htm