

**Question for written answer E-003379/2019  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Carmen Avram (S&D)**

Subject: European sugar industry: threats and challenges in the context of the Mercosur trade agreement

The EU's sugar industry has been facing new challenges since 2017, with the liberalisation of the market and the abolition of sugar quotas<sup>12</sup>. The EU-Mercosur trade agreement and its concession of 190 000 tonnes of sugar, the EU's biggest ever, has contributed to this mounting pressure<sup>3</sup>.

While beet growers in the EU are constrained to continue to respect the rigorous standards of the CAP<sup>4</sup> and the ambitious objectives of the Green New Deal, the Mercosur agreement will flood the market with large quantities of highly subsidised cane sugar, which is often produced to low quality standards using cheap labour and unsustainable farming techniques.

This puts dangerous pressure on the sugar industry, which contributed almost EUR 16 billion to the EU's GDP in 2017, and which supports 140 000 farmers and their rural communities across the EU each year<sup>5</sup>. The Mercosur agreement could cause 7-10 sugar factories located in the EU to close, as indicated in a letter sent in July to Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan by representatives of the sugar manufacturing associations CEFS, EFFAT and CIBE. Romanian factories could be among those facing closure.

1. When will the Commission develop an adequate toolkit to respond to the cyclical crises that might affect the sugar sector in the future?
2. How will it implement the recommendations of the High-Level Group on Sugar<sup>6</sup>?
3. If several markets (including sugar) were to face crises at the same time, how would the Commission use the EUR 1 billion Mercosur safety net reserved for the sugar industry that was announced by Commissioner Hogan?

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/sugar/doc/sugar-faq\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/sugar/doc/sugar-faq_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-3487\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3487_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.effat.org/featured/concession-to-mercotur-to-pile-pressure-on-the-eu-sugar-sector/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en)

<sup>5</sup> <https://cefs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/18.02.26-CSR-report-2017-vFinal-HIGH-DEFINITION.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/plants\\_and\\_plant\\_products/documents/final-report-high-level-group-meeting-sugar.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/plants_and_plant_products/documents/final-report-high-level-group-meeting-sugar.pdf)