

**Question for written answer E-003697/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Public health problem caused by ethylene oxide from third countries

Ethylene oxide 'is a substance classified as a carcinogen, mutagen and reprotoxic agent, the use of which has been banned in the European Union as a product for the protection of food and feed since 2011.'

In the agri-food industry, it is used as a preventive treatment in the form of a gas and also acts as a biocide as it can kill bacteria present in spices.

Following a recent mass recall of sesame in France, some batches were found to contain levels of ethylene oxide up to 186 mg/kg, 3 500 times higher than the maximum residue limit (MRL)¹.

In February, the Senate, in its information report on withdrawals and recalls of sesame seed products imported from India, reported 'samples containing residues of 50 mg/kg, almost 1 000 times higher than the authorised MRL and 5 000 times higher than the maximum MRL for organic products'.

1. What is the Commission's explanation for the lack of health checks at borders?
2. How does it intend to deal with the import of sesame seeds from third countries which do not comply with European standards?

¹ http://www.senat.fr/rap/r20-368/r20-368_mono.html