

**Priority question for written answer P-000050/2024/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Investigation by the Commission into importer and distribution chains in Malta

Recent data shows that food prices in Malta have been rising at their fastest rate in four years.

While it is easy to justify the high prices by economic factors, such as COVID-19, war, conflicts, high-energy prices, inflation, and global supply-chain bottlenecks, some of the problems in Malta are not new.

Due to its size and geographical limitations, Malta has ended up with de facto monopolies at the distribution level, where a handful of importers control the majority of the supply of food and essential products and often take advantage of the situation by unfairly inflating prices or controlling and limiting brands and products at the expense of vulnerable consumers.

1. Can the Commission use all its powers to conduct an investigation and prosecute anticompetitive conduct and practices that prevent, restrict, or distort competition within the food chain market in Malta, such as fixing prices or trading conditions, limiting or controlling import, export and the production of food products and sources of supply?
2. Can the Commission also investigate the concentration of power and dominant position in Malta's importation and distribution market, which is controlled by a few importers that are taking advantage of the current social and economic situation?
3. What measures will the Commission take if the dominant undertakings in question are found to be engaging in anticompetitive activities and failing to comply with EU competition rules?

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