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Plenary sitting

13.5.2015

B8-0452/2015

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B8-0117/2015

pursuant to Rule 128(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on the outbreak of *Xylella fastidiosa* affecting olive trees
(2015/2652(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

European Parliament resolution on the outbreak of *Xylella fastidiosa* affecting olive trees (2015/2652(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Directive 2000/29/EC of 8 May 2000 on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community¹,
 - having regard to the scientific opinion of the European Food Safety Authority of 6 January 2015 on the risks to plant health posed by *Xylella fastidiosa* in the EU territory, with the identification and evaluation of risk reduction options,
 - having regard to the Commission implementing decisions of 13 February and 23 July 2014 and of 28 April 2015 as regards measures to prevent the introduction into, and spread within, the Union of *Xylella fastidiosa*,
 - having regard to the question to the Commission on the outbreak of *Xylella fastidiosa* affecting olive trees (O-000038/2015 – B8-0117/2015),
 - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas *Xylella fastidiosa* is a highly dangerous, immediate threat to the production in southern Europe of certain crops, including olive, almond and peach trees, and ornamental plants, and a potential threat to other crops such as vines and citrus trees, and could lead to unprecedented and devastating losses, with dramatic economic, environmental and social consequences;
- B. whereas the bacterium is already causing severe damage to olive groves in the Apulia region of southern Italy, potentially threatening other crops and regions;
- C. whereas olive production is one of the Apulia region's most important agricultural sectors, accounting for 11.6 % (or EUR 522 million) of the total value of agricultural production in the region and 30 % of the value of Italian olive production in 2013;
- D. whereas the presence of *Xylella fastidiosa* is causing severe economic damage, not only to olive producers but also to the entire chain of production (oil mills, including cooperative and private mills) and marketing and to tourism-related activities;
- E. whereas more than one million olive trees have been attacked by the bacterium in Italy;
- F. whereas the first notification of an outbreak of *Xylella fastidiosa* was made by the Italian authorities on 21 October 2013;
- G. whereas the inspections carried out in Italy in November 2014 by the Food and

¹ OJ L 169, 10.7.2000, p. 1.

Veterinary Office (FVO) of the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety confirm that the situation has dramatically deteriorated and that a further spread of the bacterium cannot be ruled out;

- H. whereas the *Xylella fastidiosa* blight has already ravaged large areas of production in third countries, such as vineyards in California and citrus groves in Brazil;
 - I. whereas no treatment is currently available to cure diseased plants in the field, and whereas affected plants tend to remain infected throughout their lives or to collapse quickly;
 - J. whereas more than 300 different plants can host the disease, including asymptomatic wild plants, in the European Union;
 - K. whereas eradicating plants declared to be infected would not be enough to stop the spread of the disease, and whereas phytosanitary measures can only be taken to eliminate the insects that are the vectors of *Xylella fastidiosa*;
 - L. whereas other pathogens, such as the so-called 'black spot' found in citrus imports from South Africa, also represent significant risks to EU production;
 - M. whereas the European Food Safety Authority has emphasised that, given the difficulty of stopping the spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* once it affects a production area, preventive actions focused on imports should be prioritised;
1. Notes that the implementing decisions taken before April 2015 by the Commission focused mainly on internal actions to fight the outbreak and did not include strong measures to prevent the entry of the disease into the European Union from third countries;
 2. Calls on the Commission to take robust measures against *Xylella fastidiosa* and other dangerous organisms such as 'black spot' in order to prevent the import of infected material into the EU; welcomes the decision taken in April 2015 by the Commission to stop imports of infected coffee plants from Costa Rica and Honduras, and the restrictions adopted in respect of plant imports from affected areas in other third countries; asks for the application, if necessary, of stronger measures, including the authorisation of imports from pest-free production sites only;
 3. Regrets the fact that very often the Commission does not react quickly enough to prevent the entry into the EU of plant diseases from third countries; urges the Commission, therefore, to verify the source of the infection and to review the EU official phytosanitary control system in order to protect and safeguard our territory;
 4. Urges the Commission, especially in view of the onset of summer, to take more effective measures to avoid the spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the EU, in particular by targeting the crops most at risk, while not neglecting other crops that could also be seriously affected by the disease;
 5. Urges the Commission to promote intensified research efforts without delay, including

by making funds available for research institutes, with a view to improving our scientific knowledge of *Xylella fastidiosa* and positively identifying the nature of the link between the pathogen, the symptoms and the development of disease;

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to compensate producers for eradication measures and loss of revenue – which involves losses in terms not only of agricultural production but also of cultural heritage, history and tourism-related activities;
7. Suggests launching information campaigns to encourage producers to alert the competent authorities immediately to the presence – or suspected presence – of the bacterium; calls on the Commission to identify incentives for producers implementing preventive measures;
8. Calls for greater means to be made available to ensure the detection of harmful organisms at points of entry into the EU; furthermore, encourages the Member States to increase the number of regular inspections with a view to preventing the spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* outside the demarcated areas;
9. Calls on the Commission to provide an open database, with a list of institutions and competent authorities at EU and Member State level, for the exchange of information and experience, including best practices, as well as for rapid alerting of the competent authorities and the taking of necessary measures;
10. Calls on the Commission to draft, in a transparent manner, comprehensive guidelines for the implementation of preventive and disease control measures, with clear indications of their scope and duration, based on existing experience and best practices, that can be used as a support tool by the competent authorities and services in the Member States;
11. Asks the Commission to report annually to Parliament on the threat posed to EU producers by *Xylella fastidiosa* and other dangerous organisms;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.