

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3621/01

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to the Commission

Subject: Temporary suspension of imports of Spanish clementines into the USA

This week it has been reported that imports of Spanish clementines into the USA have been temporarily suspended and/or banned on the grounds that the US plant-health authorities have allegedly discovered one live and several dead fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) larvae in imports from Spain. Following various confused reports and a temporary re-opening lasting one hour, the US authorities decided to suspend such imports sine die. Spanish producers reject the explanations given by the USA, which they believe to be largely prompted by pressure from US farmers, who are experiencing direct competition from increased European citrus-fruit exports.

In view of the fact that this illegal means may be used by other countries and in respect of other European products, would the Commission answer the following questions?

Is it aware of the above threat to European exports?

What action is it intending to take in order to ensure that the rules laid down in agreements with third countries are strictly observed?

If it proves to be the case that the grounds put forward by the US authorities are actually trade barriers, how and by whom is compensation to be paid to European farmers in order to make good the losses they have suffered in terms both of product value and of market share lost?