**Question for written answer E-004652/2018**

**to the Commission**

Rule 130

**Michela Giuffrida (S&D)**

Subject: Grape berry cracking in Sicily

Cracking is a plant disease which is causing considerable damage to annual grape production in southern Italy, especially Sicily. The month of June was crucial, with temperatures of 1.5 degrees higher than average and exceptionally high rainfall (Italian National Research Council figures). Cracking remains one of the least understood grape diseases, both as regards the complexity of the problem and the difficulties in predicting it.

Sicily has the largest wine-growing area in Italy and is also facing an uphill struggle battling against authorisations to replant vines elsewhere. According to CIA Sicilia (Italian Farmers Confederation - Sicily Region) figures, cracking has caused an average drop in production of at least 20% in the provinces of Palermo, Trapani and Agrigento, the source of around 80% of all Sicilian wine. According to ISTAT, the 2018 grape harvest should generate total production of 4.5 million hectolitres, far from the over 6 million in 2016. Around 1 000 companies, with 8 000 hectares of vineyards, will suffer estimated damage of EUR 35-40 000 per hectare.

In the light of the above, can the Commission say:

1) What steps does it intend to take to address cracking?

2) Does it intend to launch a scientific study into the causes of cracking?