Subject: Bird flu

As the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) confirms, with 5,300 cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) detected in farmed, captive and wild birds, the 2021-2022 epidemic season has been the worst ever recorded in Europe. The persistence of the virus in wild birds indicates it may have become endemic. According to EFSA, 2,398 outbreaks were detected in domestic poultry, 168 in captive birds and 2,733 in wild birds across 36 European countries.

The situation described by EFSA tallies with how it appears to ornithologists in the field, who are reporting that sightings of wild birds such as gannets and skuas have fallen drastically. With the season for water birds to migrate to Europe about to start, ornithologists are concerned about the possible impacts in terms of bird death rates, transmission to farmed birds and the virus jumping to humans.

With that in mind:

1. Is the Commission working on targeted measures to stop the spread of HPAI, and, specifically, is it making efforts to strengthen dedicated surveillance systems in areas where large numbers of migratory water birds gather, and bolster early warning systems to prevent transmission to farmed birds?

2. Does the Commission intend to make specific recommendations to the authorities about protocols to follow for the collection of wild birds, in order to ensure the safety of those involved in such activities?