

**Question for written answer E-002694/2023
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Aurélia Beigneux (ID)

Subject: Lavender fields ravaged by owlet moth caterpillars

Invasive species such as the caterpillars of owlet moths – which the Saharan winds brought to southern France from North Africa – pose a threat to biodiversity.

As if the pressures caused by prices collapsing over the last three years were not enough, lavender growers are now seeing their crops ravaged by these caterpillars, which eat through them at top speed. This means the growers have to harvest their lavender early. This damage is putting the whole sector at risk. The losses suffered by some growers as a result of these pests range from 30 to 100% of their crops.

And yet this destruction is not included in the list of agricultural disasters, as the owlet moth caterpillar is not regarded as an eligible pest. An exceptional assistance package was put in place from 16 August to 8 September, but the conditions were too restrictive and the amounts paid out are insufficient to make up for the damage.

In view of the above:

1. Is the Commission planning to set up a solidarity and compensation scheme for farmers who have been hit hard by this?
2. Has the Commission anticipated the impact that this threat will have on our biodiversity?

Submitted: 19.9.2023