Question for written answer E-002758/2023
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Request for the Commission to take action in response to a new attack on biodiversity in
              Italy: arrival of the red imported fire ant in Sicily

A recent study by *Current Biology*[1] has reported that *Solenopsis invicta*, or the red imported fire ant,
has arrived in Italy, establishing itself in Sicily, where 88 nests were found in an area of 4.7 hectares.

This is the first time this species has been found settling in Europe, and it risks being the latest
disaster for biodiversity in our lands, caused by one of the most invasive alien species that we know
of.

According to the study, around 7% of Europe's territory and 50% of our cities have the right conditions
for *Solenopsis invicta* to spread.

According to data from the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, 3 500 alien
species have been identified in Italy alone, including, for example, *Elodea nuttallii* (western
waterweed), blue crab and *Halyomorpha halys* (brown marmorated stink bug).

A study by the UN-associated body IPBES[2] shows that the global economic impact is estimated to be
USD 423 billion per year and increases exponentially every year, while the cost in terms of
biodiversity is that 60% of species have gone extinct due to the introduction of invasive alien species.

In view of the above:

1.   What action does the Commission intend to take to protect our ecosystem from terrible attacks
     on biodiversity that risk being irreversible?

2.   Does it intend to allocate funds to help Sicily eradicate *Solenopsis invicta* and prevent it from
     spreading throughout Italy and Europe?

Supporter[3]

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[1]   https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(23)00974-
      0?_returnURL=https%3A%2F%2Flinkinghub.elsevier.com%2Fretrieve%2Fpii%2FS0960982223009740%3Fs
      howall%3Dtrue
[2]   https://www.ipbes.net/ias
[3]   This question is supported by a Member other than the authors: Gianantonio Da Re (ID)