

**Question for written answer P-008472/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 130

Michela Giuffrida (S&D)

Subject: Spreading of plant diseases in southern Europe

Tomato crops in the south-eastern part of Sicily (from Pachino to Licata) have, for months, been stricken by the Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV), a highly aggressive virus which has led to the grubbing up of over 70% of the tomatoes that were due to be harvested between November and December.

In addition to the TYLCV, which is also known as New Delhi, a new virus has been identified which attacks in particular vegetable crops in open fields, such as tomatoes and courgettes, and has been found in the province of Ragusa, Sicily, by the Department of Agrarian and Forestry Science of the University of Palermo, in collaboration with some private laboratories. It is a virus with symptoms that are similar to those of New Delhi, (leaf curl), but is perhaps more aggressive, and it is still not clear how it is transmitted.

In view of the growing number of cases of new, increasingly virulent, viruses that are attacking crops, in particular in southern Europe, should the Commission not launch an applied research programme and a system to prevent new viruses from spreading?

Given that the regions of southern Europe have proven to be more vulnerable and exposed to the spread of plant viruses, should the Commission not, in addition, introduce specific measures, including compensatory ones, for the regions that have been the most adversely affected by these viruses?