

**Priority question for written answer P-004441/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Spread of 'alien' parasites in Puglia

The main trade organisations in Italy, and in Puglia in particular, have sounded the alarm over the invasion of 'alien parasites' from other continents, which have been attacking trees, plants and fruit.

Aside from the well-known phenomenon of the *Xylella Fastidiosa*, which has brought Puglia's olive-growing sector to its knees and blighted the local landscape, there are now other parasites, such as the *Drosophila suzukii* which infests red berries, the *Aleurocanthus spiniferus* which ravages citrus fruits and vines, and the Citrus Tristeza Virus.

According to a study by CIHEAM, the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, in 2015-2016 the prevalence of these parasitic infestations stood between 3 % and 16 %, whereas by 2019 it had reached a rate of between 18 % and 100 %, inflicting huge damage on the environment, landscape and the economy.

Climate change and international trade are the main causes of these phenomena.

In view of this, can the Commission answer the following questions:

1. Is the Commission aware of the proliferation of 'alien' parasites within the EU?
2. Is it aware of the spread of these parasites and viruses in Puglia?
3. What measures does it intend to take to combat the phenomenon, and will it step up trade checks in order to stem the spread of plant diseases, parasites and viruses from other continents?