

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Safety of the Food Chain
Acting Director

Brussels,
SANTE.E2/PDR/pm (2015) 3564981

Subject: Reply to the letter from Peacelink to Commissioner Andriukaitis on *Xylella fastidiosa* and reply to the direct email to the Cabinet

Dear Ms Battaglia,

I took note of your e-mail of 9 July 2015 [Ares(2015)2905072] and your letter of 15 July 2015 (Ares(2015)2981603) addressed to Commissioner Andriukaitis, who asked me to reply on his behalf.

As already communicated to you on 9 June 2015 [Ares(2015)2408985], the Commission is committed to ensure a timely implementation of the EU emergency measures on *Xylella fastidiosa* (Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/789) without any further delays. The seriousness of the bacterium obliges everyone to take this situation with responsibility in the interest of the affected area, the rest of Italy and the Union as a whole.

Xylella fastidiosa is regulated in the EU as quarantine pest under Council Directive 2000/29/EC ("The Plant Health Directive"¹) on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community. As such, the introduction of this pest into, and its spreading within all Member States, shall be banned. The Plant Health Directive provides Member States with the legal obligations to abide by, once the pest is known to be present. Irrespective of the symptoms, all necessary measures to eradicate it, or if that is impossible, to inhibit its further spread, must be taken.

The visit of Commissioner Andriukaitis in the south of Lecce, in the area of Gallipoli, on 20 July 2015, confirms once again the dramatic deterioration of the situation. Italy has to stop further spread of the bacterium and to preserve the rest of olive trees in the province of Lecce and the rest of Puglia which are still healthy and productive, and still represent a source of income for farmers. This will prevent unilateral measures by Member States and third countries.

¹ Council Directive 2000/29/EC of 8 May 2000 on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community (OJ L 169/1)

Ms Antonia Battaglia
Peacelink
By e-mail only: Antoniabattaglia@yahoo.it

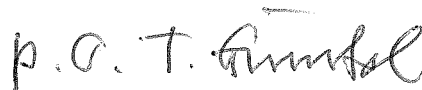
In the area of Gallipoli visited by the Commissioner, sampling and testing are no longer performed, as eradication is clearly no longer possible and asking to remove all infected plants in this specific area is simply not realistic. Therefore, this situation is not covered in the report of the Italian Authorities you are referring to.

However, in the northern part of the province of Lecce, as also confirmed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the removal of infected trees is together with other measures proposed by the Commission crucial to stop, or at least slow down, further spread of the bacterium. According to the plant health experts of EFSA, today, there is no control method currently known to cure diseased plants in the field. Changes in cropping systems could have some impact on the disease (e.g. pruning, fertilisation and irrigation), but this is not enough to cure plants.

As you know, the Commission is very committed to strengthen research activities on this bacterium, to understand better its epidemiology, the role played by the insect vectors, as well as to develop and test potential control methods. However, we have to acknowledge that possible alternative control means will not be available in the short term. Meanwhile, the implementation of the EU emergency measures should continue in view of the seriousness of the situation.

Lastly, as already communicated to you, we are exploring all possible tools available at EU level and deploying all efforts to assist the Italian Authorities and the relevant stakeholders financially in the implementation of these measures in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'p. o. T. Flüh', written in a cursive style.

Michael Flüh