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Xylella emergency

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

Tabled by José Bové on behalf of the Greens/EFA group

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission Implementing Decision of 29 April 2015 as regards measures to prevent the introduction into and the spread within the Union of *Xylella fastidiosa*,
- having regard to Council Directive 2000/29/EC on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community ,
- having regard to Directive 2009/128/EC establishing a framework for Community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides ,
- having regard to the question to the Commission on the *Xylella fastidiosa* emergency (O-000038 – B8-0117/2015),
- having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas in a recent scientific opinion on the risk assessment of *Xylella fastidiosa*, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) stated that several elements make eradication impractical; in particular EFSA stated that ‘there are no indications that the option of eradication will be successful once the disease is established in an area’ and that, therefore, ‘priority should be given to the prevention of the introduction’, adding that for containment strategies, which ‘are no longer possible when the disease is widespread’, effectiveness ‘varies from negligible to moderate’;

B. whereas in the same opinion EFSA stated that ‘the intensive use of insecticide treatment to limit the disease transmission and control the insect vector may have direct and indirect consequences for the environment by modifying whole food webs with cascading consequences, and hence affecting various trophic levels’ and that ‘large-scale insecticide treatments also represent risks for human and animal health’;

C. whereas since the intricate details of the infection and transmission mechanisms of the pathology associated with the *Xylella fastidiosa* strains in question are not yet fully known, the precautionary

principle should apply in dealing with this outbreak, and the most destructive and irreversible actions should be a last resort after a cascade of progressively less destructive measures;

D. whereas resilience to the invasion and establishment and spread of pests depends on balanced and biologically diverse agro-ecosystems with a living, healthy soil and beneficial species which serve to protect crops; whereas, nevertheless, an invasive pest new to an ecological community can multiply and spread unchecked;

E. whereas inappropriate pesticide use can disrupt natural defence strategies through its effects on non-target species, including beneficial microbes, and so leave the agro-ecosystem susceptible to future attacks;

1. Considers that the Union response must be robust and failsafe the first time around, without destroying rural livelihoods or the natural capital and future productivity of both the affected regions and those potentially affected;

2. Considers that, given the extreme difficulty and low chances of controlling the spread of the disease once it is established, it is of fundamental importance to call a strict halt to the movement of host plants and potential host plants, from infected regions both outside and within the EU; considers, therefore, that total quarantine is essential for potentially infected material coming from infected zones, and that, accordingly, derogations under any conditions that carry the slightest risk are irresponsible; considers that with specific reference to Article 4(6) and (7) of the Commission Implementing Decision laying down conditions for derogation, the bacteria would still be present in the environment and as knowledge of transmission is incomplete, a precautionary approach should therefore be taken and derogation on defining zones ought not to be possible; with specific reference to Article 17, considers allowing any introduction of potential host plants into the EU from third countries where the disease is known to be present to be too risky, especially given the possibility of unreliable or dysfunctional control systems on both sides;

3. Considers that as well as prohibiting imports of plant material from countries infected by *Xylella fastidiosa* strains (the USA, Mexico, Costa Rica, etc.), the Commission should establish and regularly update a list of third countries considered risky;

4. Calls for increased surveillance and controls of plant material coming from countries with or bordering zones affected by the disease;

5. Considers that in the Commission text, the concept of physical protection of propagation areas intended to be free of the disease should be specified, and should include establishing greenhouses with double layers of hermetic seals, in order to allow plants free of the disease to grow in total isolation from the surrounding environment and to prepare for the replanting of zones which have been infected and subsequently cleared of the disease;

6. Underlines the need to run information campaigns in potentially affected areas of the EU, specifically in the Mediterranean basin, where production of olives and other crops which are potential hosts is vital to sustain livelihoods, in order to sensitise those involved not only in the agricultural sector but also the horticultural sector, including retailers of ornamental plants, professional gardeners and their customers;

7. Insists on adequate compensation for loss of trees and livelihood/income in the case of eradication of olive trees and other potential hosts, and, particularly, that the crisis reserve should be used to fund the EU contribution to this;

8. Warns that this phytosanitary crisis must not be allowed to become a catalyst for farm restructuring and eliminating small farmers in the affected regions; insists further that the land where infected trees are found should remain as agricultural land, and should not be reclassified for other uses such as tourism or

construction;

9. Insists that aid should be granted to farmers for re-establishing stocks of olives and other affected tree crops, and that this should also cover rehabilitation of agro-ecosystems including the soil, as well as establishing robust biological diversity and, especially, ensuring genetic diversity of the planting stock that ideally includes resistance to or tolerance of the disease; considers that one of the aims of any aid granted should be to ensure balanced, biologically diverse agro-ecosystems and landscapes that are more resilient to future attacks;

10. Calls on the Commission to include under eradication measures (Article 6 of the implementing decision) the principle of a cascade of control measures so that the most destructive and irreversible measures are carried out as options of last resort; following strict quarantine measures to stop movement of plant material from infected zones, the following measures would be applied step-wise before progressing to the next:

- non-invasive and non-destructive measures, including selective pruning and burning of diseased branches and other physical methods;

- use of appropriate plant protection products approved for organic production listed in Annex II to Regulation 889/2008;

- use of integrated pest management;

- controlled precision application of pesticide on affected trees, i.e. no prophylactic or blanket use and no targeting of entire taxonomic classes of insect, only using substances proven to be effective and appropriate and approved for use in the EU, using the least destructive substances first; EFSA conclusions on risks and limited effectiveness of insecticide use should be specifically borne in mind; if used, these measures shall be backed up with rehabilitation of the agro-ecosystem, including soil;

- grubbing-up shall only be used as an option of last resort;

11. Calls for more research funding, including under the Horizon 2020 programme, to address outstanding details of the pathology, especially for participative research and breeding of tolerant or resistant varieties of the affected permanent crops; considers, therefore, that this research should also cover the definition of all hosts and potential hosts, insect vectors and other transmission methods, and, most importantly, alternatives to the most destructive and irreversible control and eradication methods, as well as prevention strategies and susceptibility to attack;

12. Calls upon decision-makers to consider in their containment strategies the risk posed by trade in ornamental plants which are potential hosts outside of the Mediterranean basin, and specifically their potential role as a disease reservoir or (re-)infection route;

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