

**Question for written answer P-012187/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Raffaele Baldassarre (PPE)

Subject: Olive tree disease in Puglia

Initially only sporadic and imperceptible, in recent months a very serious, extensive and deadly plant disease has been spreading among olive trees in Puglia and in particular in the province of Lecce.

The epidemic, which causes the trees to dry out, has spread across an area of around 8000 hectares, affecting tens of thousands of olive trees. Following investigations and tests carried out by all the offices and institutions responsible, incontrovertible evidence has emerged that the infection comes from a bacterium called 'Xylella fastidiosa', a particularly dangerous agent that has never been identified in Europe but which, in America and Asia, has caused disease in various species of plants, including vines and citrus trees, resulting in substantial losses to the agricultural sector and the economy.

The vastness of the area and the number of affected trees, not to mention the extremely rapid spread of the bacterium, is causing grave concern not only for the damage already done, but for that which might be caused by further contagion, which could affect the rest of the olive, and other, crops in Puglia, Italy and Europe.

In the light of this dangerous, scientifically proven epidemic and of the only course of action recommended, namely the uprooting and destruction of the diseased trees, can the Commission say:

1. what measures it intends to take, as a matter of urgency, to ascertain and conduct checks on the epidemic in question and, consequently, what scientific and technical aid can be provided to support local institutions;
2. what financial measures can be taken with a view to setting up a sanitary cordon around the affected area and uprooting the infected trees, in order to prevent the spread of the bacterium;
3. what financial assistance can be given to producers affected by this extremely serious infection that is causing such great economic damage?