

EN

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Answer given by Ms Kyriakides
on behalf of the European Commission
(23.10.2024)

The Commission invests in plant health research and innovation, with EUR 189 million allocated over the past four years through Horizon Europe¹, and keeps it as a priority in the next work programmes under Cluster 6 ‘Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment’² of Horizon Europe³. At present, there is no project relating to the *Scirtothrips aurantii*. A call for proposals for projects related to regulated pests has recently closed and is currently under evaluation⁴.

Both Spain and Portugal apply eradication measures for *Scirtothrips aurantii*. Regulation (EU) 2021/690⁵ allows them to request co-financing for eradication measures.

When eradication is no longer possible, Member States request for containment measures, which should be adopted by an Implementing Regulation. To date, the Commission has not received such request from Spain or Portugal.

As regards the import of citrus fruit, cold treatment has been added to the EU requirements as a measure to guarantee freedom from *Thaumatotibia leucotreta* in oranges. The EU follows a risk-based approach as regards protective measures against pests. To date there is not sufficient evidence to support an extension of that measure to other citrus fruits for other Union quarantine pests.

Regulation (EU) 2022/2389⁶ on frequency rates prescribes 100% identity and physical checks at import for citrus fruits, except for those referred to Annex I of that Regulation. The number of non-compliances at import is a criterion for deciding the frequency rates. As regards controls at origin, the Commission has carried out audits⁷ in many third countries that the EU imports citrus fruits from, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Argentina, Israel and Tunisia.

¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/e8a5772e-9fca-4583-a81b-649729068f1e_en

² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-6-food-bioeconomy-natural-resources-agriculture-and-environment_en

³ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/strategic-plan_en

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl6-2024-farm2fork-02-4-two-stage>

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/690/oj>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2389&qid=1695292904290>

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report>