

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001715/24  
to the Commission  
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D)  
(15 September 2024)**

*Subject:* Action to combat the canker disease affecting chestnut crops

Chestnut cultivation is one of the mainstays of the economy and of rural life in many mountainous areas of Greece, particularly the Pelion area. In recent years, however, aside from climate conditions, chestnut growers have been facing serious problems because of chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*), which has led to significant losses in production and destroyed thousands of trees.

Despite the attempts at biological control and other management measures applied in some areas of Europe, the disease continues to spread, causing irreversible damage to crops. Chestnut producers have expressed concern for the future of their crops and the financial viability of their families. Their output this year is down by some 50%.

Taking into account the critical nature of the situation and the need to support growers:

1. What additional steps does the Commission intend to take to support research and the application of pioneering biological methods of controlling the disease, such as the use of hypoviral agents which have succeeded in other regions of Europe?
2. Is there any provision for giving financial support to Greek growers affected by the disease in order to reduce the consequences of production losses and secure the viability of the crops?
3. How does the Commission intend to promote the exchange of expertise and practices between Member States so that the blight on chestnut crops is dealt with effectively?

Submitted: 15.9.2024

**Answer given by Mr Wojciechowski on behalf of the European Commission  
(4 November 2024)**

The Commission places significant importance on investing in research and innovation to address plant health challenges, with EUR 189 million allocated over the past 4 years through Horizon Europe <sup>(1)</sup> <sup>(2)</sup>.

Plant health research and innovation, including the development of knowledge and tools to tackle plant pests, remains a priority in the future work programmes under Cluster 6 <sup>(3)</sup> of Horizon Europe.

*Cryphonectria parasitica* is regulated in the EU as protected zone quarantine pest. Furthermore, the pest is regulated in the EU as Union regulated non-quarantine pest (RNQP) and as a result the propagating material specifically of *Castanea sativa* (chestnuts) introduced into or moved in the whole EU has to be free from the pest.

As Greece is not a protected zone, eradication of the pest is not a legal obligation and therefore no financial contribution from the Single Market Programme is provided for such measures.

However, the Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan Regulation <sup>(4)</sup> offers Member States different possibilities to help farmers cope with pest infestations which may include support for investments, support in form of loans, guarantees and working capital, insurance schemes, cooperation projects and advisory services. It is up to Member States to plan and implement such measures.

The EU Horizon Europe funded project AdvisoryNetPEST <sup>(5)</sup> will establish and upgrade a network of advisory services across the EU, increasing the knowledge sharing between advisors, and among the whole AKIS <sup>(6)</sup>, promoting the adoption of innovative solutions on crop protection by farmers.

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<sup>(1)</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en)

<sup>(2)</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/e8a5772e-9fca-4583-a81b-649729068f1e\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/e8a5772e-9fca-4583-a81b-649729068f1e_en)

<sup>(3)</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/strategic-plan\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/strategic-plan_en)

<sup>(4)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013, OJ L 435/L 6.12.2021.

<sup>(5)</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101134122>

<sup>(6)</sup> Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems.