

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001851/24
to the Commission
Carmen Crespo Díaz (PPE), Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez (PPE)
(27 September 2024)**

Subject: Reinforcing checks on imports from non-EU countries in the face of the rising number of consignments affected by citrus black spot

European citrus fruit growers are warning of the risk posed to plant health for EU crops by the increase in the number of imports affected by *Phyllosticta citricarpa* — better known as citrus black spot — detected in recent months in European ports, having arrived from non-EU countries, and specifically from countries like South Africa. In June and July, 12 further consignments of imported citrus fruit affected by the virus and destined for the European market were intercepted.

In light of the fear that this virus will spread and the risk that this would pose to European citrus fruit growers, especially those in Spain, we believe it is necessary to put in place measures to reinforce import checks at border crossing inspection points in the network of European ports.

In view of the above:

1. Is the Commission planning measures to reinforce checks in the context of inspections of imports from non-EU countries?
2. Has the Spanish Government requested assistance from the European Commission in the form of greater technical resources and more staff and to reinforce checks on imports from non-EU countries at the country's border ports?

Submitted: 27.9.2024

**Question for written answer E-001876/24
to the Commission
Esther Herranz García (PPE)
(30 September 2024)**

Subject: Black spot detected in citrus fruits imported from South Africa

As we have been warning since at least 2015, a fungus that causes citrus black spot disease (*Phyllosticta citricarpa*) is being frequently detected every season in citrus fruits imported from South Africa.

Twenty shipments of citrus fruits contaminated with citrus black spot were intercepted in June, July and August. As these are the first three months of the importing season, we fear that the number is set to rise.

In view of this situation, which has been ongoing for years:

1. What measures does the European Commission intend to take to ensure that this plague does not reach European crops? Is the Commission considering closing its borders to citrus fruit imports from South Africa?
2. Given that imports contaminated with citrus black spot and false codling moth (*Thaumetotibia leucotreta*) have also been detected in imports from Zimbabwe, when does the Commission intend to extend mandatory cold treatment to imports from that country?

Submitted: 30.9.2024

**Joint answer given by Ms Kyriakides on behalf of the European Commission
(15 November 2024)**

Regulation (EU) 2022/2389 ⁽¹⁾ on frequency rates prescribes 100% identity and physical checks at import for citrus fruits, except for those countries referred to Annex I of that regulation.

The number of non-compliances at import is a criterion for deciding the frequency rates. The Commission also carries out audits ⁽²⁾ in third countries from where the EU imports citrus fruits, including South Africa and Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the Commission and the Member States discuss monthly at the Standing Committee for Plants, Animals, Food and Feed the non-compliances and any follow-up actions that need to be taken.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2389&qid=1695292904290>

⁽²⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report>

According to point 62 of Annex VII of Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 ⁽³⁾ the obligation of cold treatment on oranges applies to countries of the African continent, Cape Verde, Saint Helena, Madagascar, La Réunion, Mauritius and Israel, should they choose to export oranges under a systems approach.

The Commission has been offering for several years training on import controls to the border inspectors of the Member States through the programme Better Training for Safer Food ⁽⁴⁾.

Inspectors from Spain have been regularly participating in the trainings. In addition, since 2019, the five European Reference Laboratories in plant health ⁽⁵⁾ have been organising activities related to quarantine plant pest diagnostics for National Reference Laboratories, including interlaboratory tests, trainings, *ad hoc* support to national references laboratories and workshops.

The Spanish National Reference Laboratories have actively participated in these activities, including those related to *Phyllosticta citricarpa* and *Thaumatotibia leucotreta*.

⁽³⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 of 28 November 2019 establishing uniform conditions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards protective measures against pests of plants, and repealing Commission Regulation (EC) No 690/2008 and amending Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2019/2072/oj

⁽⁴⁾ Better Trainer for Safer Food: <https://better-training-for-safer-food.ec.europa.eu/training/>

⁽⁵⁾ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/european-union-reference-laboratories_en#plant_health