(English version)

Question for written answer E-000525/25
to the Commission
Gilles Pennelle (PfE)
(5 February 2025)

Subject: Support for mussel farmers dealing with the spider crab crisis

The mussel farming sector is under considerable threat. Spider crab predation on bouchot mussels is a disaster for coastal producers, who are seeing their work destroyed before their eyes.

In northern Brittany, several producers have gone bankrupt as a result. The 13 mussel farming companies in the Arguenon and Fresnay bays in the Côtes-d'Armor department have already had to lay off some 30 people.

This sector is emblematic of our food culture, thanks in particular to the protected designation of origin 'Moules de bouchot de la baie du Mont Saint-Michel', and is a valuable economic resource which provides a livelihood for our coastlines.

We need more than symbolic support. It is essential that spider crab predation is recognised and tackled, and that a genuine support plan is adopted to prevent this industry and profession, of which our regions are proud, from dying.

1. To save the mussel farming sector, can the Commission offer a genuine support plan to compensate the economic losses it is experiencing?

2. Will it do all it can to stop these spider crabs making it impossible to produce bouchot mussels?

Submitted: 5.2.2025

Answer given by Mr Kadis on behalf of the European Commission
(21 March 2025)

1. The Commission is aware of the serious problems that the spider crab (*Maja squinado*) is causing in various coastal areas of France, particularly in Northern Brittany.

The Member State authorities can decide how and when to provide financial support to mussel farmers affected by the proliferation of certain species through their European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) programme. This can include measures for tackling the spread of the species, as well as directly supporting producers for example with cleaning or repairing equipment.

Furthermore, the Member State can also support more structural actions like mutual funds, insurance instruments or other collective schemes, which enhance the capacity of the sector to manage risks and respond to adverse events. Besides EMFAF support, the Member State may also decide to support mussel farmers under the sectorial state aid rules ([1]), including the *de minimis* Regulation ([2]).

For more information on the national/regional support measures that can be provided under the French EMFAF programme, we refer the Honourable Member to the EMFAF managing authority in the Member State ([3]).

2. The Commission is aware that mollusc production in the EU, including in France, is facing important challenges, including damage by proliferating predators. While the Commission is aware that France is already taking some steps to address the situation (e.g. the launch of the project Spider by Ifremer), it will follow closely the situation and support the French authorities as necessary.

([1]) Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2473 of 14 December 2022 declaring certain categories of aid to undertakings active in the production, processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products compatible with the internal market (OJ L 327, 21.12.2022, p. 82-139); Commission Guidelines for state aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector (OJ C 107, 23.3.2023, p. 1-48).

([2]) Commission Regulation (EU) No 717/2014 of 27 June 2014 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid in the fishery and aquaculture sector (OJ L 190, 28.6.2014, p. 45-54), as amended.

([3]) Direction générale des affaires maritimes, de la pêche et de l'aquaculture — DGAMPA.