

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001150/25
to the Commission**

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(18 March 2025)

Subject: Fire ant invasion in Sicily — risks and containment measures

The invasion of *Solenopsis invicta* (fire ant) in Sicily is extremely worrying, as it could spread throughout Europe. This invasive species from South America has already caused serious environmental and economic damage in the United States and Australia.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) classifies it as a high-risk invasive pest, capable of establishing itself in southern European countries with a temperate, Mediterranean climate.

Its spread could have devastating consequences on ecosystems, agriculture and public health. In Australia and the USA, it has wiped out native species, damaged crops and put humans at danger with its painful stings.

The costs of controlling it are huge: Australia estimates the impact to be around AUD 1.65 billion per year, and has spent more than 400 million on eradication programmes since 2001.

Timely and coordinated action is essential to avoid it spreading uncontrollably, which would make its eradication more difficult and expensive. Delays could exacerbate the problem, increasing the cost of containment.

In view of this:

1. Is there a structured monitoring programme and an updated map of the spread of *S. invicta* in Europe?
2. What action has been taken to limit and eradicate its presence in infested areas?
3. What funds and instruments have been or will be allocated to address this emergency at EU level?

Submitted: 18.3.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(17 June 2025)

Solenopsis invicta is on the list of invasive alien species (IAS) of Union concern established under the IAS Regulation ⁽¹⁾. Article 14 requires Member States to set up surveillance systems for IAS of Union concern, including *Solenopsis invicta*.

Member States must notify the Commission and other Member States of new introductions and spread, and the management measures applied.

Italy notified the detection of the fire ant in Sicily on 27 November 2023. No other notifications have been submitted. Species occurrence maps are available on the European Alien Species Information Network website of the Joint Research Centre ⁽²⁾.

Italy has not formally notified the management measures taken and their effectiveness in accordance with Article 17, although the Commission is aware that an action plan is adopted ⁽³⁾.

On 14 November 2024, the Commission sent a letter of formal notice to Italy ⁽⁴⁾ for failing to prevent and manage the introduction and spread of *Solenopsis invicta* as required by the IAS Regulation. Currently the Commission is assessing Italy's reply and will act accordingly.

One of the priorities of the EU programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE) ⁽⁵⁾ is tackling invasive alien species, and projects for the eradication and management of IAS of Union concern can be submitted.

In addition, the LIFE programme will finance a European Invasive Alien Species Rapid-Response Fund that will run until 2028 to support Member States for rapid eradication measures in response to early detections of potential IAS.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, OJ L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 35.

⁽²⁾ <https://easin.jrc.ec.europa.eu/easin>.

⁽³⁾ https://www2.regione.sicilia.it/deliberegiunta/file/giunta/allegati/N.242_04.07.2024.pdf.

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_24_5223.

⁽⁵⁾ LIFE: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en.
