

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003345/25
to the Commission
Dario Nardella (S&D), Giuseppe Lupo (S&D)
(1 September 2025)**

Subject: Spread of the blue crab and threats to biodiversity and production in the Orbetello lagoon

The blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*), an invasive alien species from the Atlantic coast of the United States, has now settled in the Tyrrhenian Sea, notably in the Orbetello lagoon in Tuscany, where it is causing serious harm to biodiversity and fishing activities.

The proliferation of the species — compounded by the recent deaths of large numbers of sea bream and sea bass — is undermining the lagoon's ecological balance, and threatening the production of fisheries and aquaculture cooperatives and businesses. Each female can lay up to 1.5 million eggs per brood, with several reproductive cycles per year, leading to an exponential increase. Despite some 60 tonnes of crabs having been disposed of, these measures are not proving effective enough to contain the invasion. Moreover, the resources earmarked for addressing the problem are insufficient to guarantee a structural and lasting response.

In view of this:

1. Will the Commission take steps to include the blue crab on the list of invasive alien species of EU concern?
2. Will it set aside specific funding to support fishing and aquaculture businesses affected by the proliferation of the blue crab in Italy?
3. What measures will it take to halt the damage this species is causing to biodiversity?

Submitted: 1.9.2025

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(3 October 2025)**

As the Commission noted in its reply to Written Question E-003566/2022, a risk assessment for *Callinectes sapidus* was approved in March 2022 by the Scientific Forum established under the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Regulation ⁽¹⁾.

However, bearing in mind that this species is currently being fished and commercialised in some Member States, the Commission has not proposed it yet for inclusion on the list of invasive alien species of Union concern.

As regards support to the fishing and aquaculture businesses, the EU provides for the funding of national initiatives under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) ⁽²⁾.

Several Mediterranean Member States have identified the threat posed by non-indigenous species (NIS) and put in place measures to combat them.

Italy's EMFAF programme provides financial support for NIS-related projects. In addition, EUR 22.9 million of state aid was approved for blue crab-related national support measures. Some Italian regions have also mobilised additional resources.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive ⁽³⁾ requires Member States to address and correct marine environmental damage in their waters ⁽⁴⁾ and reach 'Good environmental status' (GES). Descriptor 2 of GES refers to non-indigenous species which adversely alter the ecosystem.

It is a Member State responsibility to prepare a 'programme of measures' listing national actions allowing to reach GES. Research on possible mitigation measures is also ongoing at the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean research programme ⁽⁵⁾, to which Italy is a partner.

⁽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. 35-55.

⁽²⁾ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf_en.

⁽³⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/oceans-and-seas/eu-marine-strategy-framework-directive_en.

⁽⁴⁾ Each Member State must prepare a marine strategy to 'protect and preserve the marine environment, prevent its deterioration or, where practicable, restore marine ecosystems in areas where they have been adversely affected'.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.fao.org/gfcm/activities/fisheries/scientific-advice/research-programmes/blue-crabs/en/>.