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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: State of play of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Southern Italy and risk of further spread
in the EU
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note received from the Commission services on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 16 March 2015.

Written information from the Commission services*Xylella fastidiosa*

The Commission would like to initiate a discussion with Member States on a common approach to the challenge posed by the spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Southern Italy. More effective measures to control and stop this spread are required to avoid serious damages for agriculture in Member States. The Commission is ready to take the necessary measures and is counting on full support of the affected Member State.

Xylella fastidiosa is a plant quarantine bacterium that can cause serious losses to the European agriculture and the entire agri-food chain. Because of the large number of confirmed or potential host plants and the abundance and widespread distribution of known or potential insect vectors, the spread of this bacterium in the rest of the European Union, beyond the currently affected part of Southern Italy, could take place with a high probability. So far, the main agricultural crop affected is the olive production. Overall, no treatment is currently available to cure diseased plants in the field and, most often, plants that are contaminated remain infected throughout their life or collapse quickly.

Upon the notification by Italy in October 2013 of the outbreak of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the Apulia region, which represents the only confirmed presence of this pest in the EU, the Commission adopted the first emergency measures (Commission Implementing Decision 2014/87/EU) to prevent the spread within the Union of *Xylella fastidiosa*. These measures were subsequently replaced in July 2014 by more detailed emergency measures (Commission Implementing Decision 2014/87/EU) which provide special requirements for the import and movement of host plants species into the EU, the timely control in the affected areas.

As required under the EU emergency measures, Italy has notified the delimitation of the Demarcated Area (241 000 hectares), located in the province of Lecce (Apulia region). 90 000 ha of olive orchards are included in the Demarcated Area, with around 9 000 000 olive trees.

The audit carried out by the Commission's inspection service, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the Health and Food Safety Directorate General in Italy, in November 2014, confirms that the situation has dramatically deteriorated since a previous audit in February 2014. The EU Decision is still not satisfactorily implemented and enforced. Further spread of the bacterium outside the Demarcated Area cannot be excluded.

In January 2015, the European Food Safety Authority published a Pest Risk Assessment. The list of identified host plants (approximately 300) is larger than the one currently covered under the EU emergency measures. However, not all species are susceptible to disease and associated with the four different subspecies identified of *Xylella fastidiosa*. Citrus and grapevine, which are not yet affected according to the available information, are included in the EFSA list of potential hosts.

On the basis of the new EFSA pest risk assessment and the conclusions of the FVO audit, the Commission is reviewing the EU emergency measures. A number of Member States have asked the Commission to carry out such review, both with respect to internal movement as well as to import of potential host plants. Urgent protection of the European olive production and, potentially, the grapevine and citrus production is essential now.