

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-008726/16**  
**to the Commission**  
**Mara Bizzotto (ENF)**  
(22 November 2016)

*Subject:* Proliferation of the Asian bug 'Halyomorpha halys': risk of serious damage to crops in northern Italy — call for urgent action by the Commission

Higher than average autumn temperatures have favoured the proliferation, in regions in northern Italy, of an insect that is very dangerous to crops, the brown marmorated stink bug (scientific name 'Halyomorpha halys'), which is native to eastern Asia, Taiwan, China and Japan in particular. It was Coldiretti that sounded the alarm concerning the dangers posed by the brown marmorated stink bug, forecasting enormous damage to farming in northern Italy, and especially in Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The crops most at risk are apples, pears, kiwi fruit, grapes, soya beans and maize.

The brown marmorated stink bug does not have any natural predators in Italy and for health reasons, none can be imported from eastern Asia. The proliferation of various new insect species in Italy and the EU is an ongoing issue at present that the EU institutions need to tackle urgently, in order to protect farming from damage that, according to Coldiretti, could total more than one billion euros in Italy. Moreover, clusters of these bugs are also proving a nuisance in built-up areas.

— How will the Commission support Italian farmers suffering serious crop damage caused by these Asian bugs?

— What measures will it take as a matter of urgency to support the regions of northern Italy in the steps they are taking to combat the proliferation of this insect that is threatening Italy's ecosystem?

**Answer given by Mr Hogan on behalf of the Commission**  
(26 January 2017)

The Commission would like to refer the Honourable Member to its answer to Written Question E-007951/2016 <sup>(1)</sup>.

The Italian Regional Rural Development Programmes (RDP) may grant support for investments in preventive actions aimed at reducing the consequences of probable natural disasters and support investments for the restoration of agricultural land and production potential damaged by natural disaster (including naturally occurring events of a biotic nature). Support under this measure is not granted for loss of income resulting from the natural disaster. Furthermore, the Italian National Rural Development Programme provides for the possibility to support farmers through financial contributions to insurance premiums, mutual funds, and the income stabilisation tool.

The Italian authorities may also consider granting state aids as compensation for income losses, in accordance with the conditions enshrined in the EU State aid rules <sup>(2)</sup>, or to grant *de minimis* aids, i.e. aids of a limited amount considered as not being able to distort competition (up to EUR 15 000 over any period of three fiscal years, within the limits of a national cap) under the conditions of Regulation (EU) No 1408/2013 <sup>(3)</sup>.

Concerning the timely implementation of Measure 5 of the RDP <sup>(4)</sup> (i.e. Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events and introduction of appropriate prevention actions), it should be noted that according to the principle of shared management, in Italy the rural development policy is implemented at regional level.

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<sup>(1)</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html>

<sup>(2)</sup> See in particular Article 26 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 of 25 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the TFEU (OJ L 193, 1.7.2014, p. 1); Section 1.2.1.3 of the EU Guidelines for state aid in the agricultural and forestry sectors and in rural areas 2014 to 2020 (OJ C 204, 1.7.2014, p. 1), amended by the Notice published in OJ C 390, 24.11.2015, p. 4.

<sup>(3)</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 1408/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to *de minimis* aid in the agriculture sector (OJ L 352, 24.12.2013, p. 9).

<sup>(4)</sup> Measure 5 of the RDP covers the restoration of agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters, adverse climatic events and catastrophic events and introduction of appropriate prevention actions as laid down in Article 18 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.