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Copa Cogeca warns EU on CBS

Group sends letter to European Parliament calling for more stringent citrus black spot rules to be introduced

Copa Cogeca has sent a letter to European Parliament calling on MEPs to approve a motion for a resolution, which states that EU measures to prevent the introduction of citrus black spot (CBS) in the EU are insufficient.

The motion for a resolution, which has been approved by European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, rejects the EU Commissions' proposal and calls for more stringent rules to be put in place to avoid the spread of black spot in citrus fruit coming into the EU via imports.

"It is crucial to have proper rules in force to avoid a repetition of a **Xylella-like drama**, this time in areas producing citrus fruit in the south of the EU," said Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, who led the initiative to object to the Commission's draft implementing act. If there is any lesson to be learnt from Xylella, it is that we cannot 'wait and see' nor can we stand idly by while the European Commission is trying to relax controls of imported processed fruits aimed at avoiding spread of diseases such as citrus black spot and citrus canker."

The motion for a resolution is now set to be scrutinised by the whole Parliament this week at plenary session in Strasbourg.

"I welcome this resolution which is backed up by scientific evidence from the EU Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and urge the full set of MEPs to agree on it this week," said Copa Cogeca secretary general Pekka Pesonen. "It is totally unacceptable that the EU Commission should attempt to weaken border controls on citrus fruit imports coming into the EU and destined for processing as they do not take on board EFSA's recommendations on the risks to the EU's citrus groves into account.

"The EU and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization recommend cold treatment to combat this harmful organism by ensuring that the citrus fruit comes in a container at a low temperature," he continued.

"Unless the EU Commission puts in place tough measures to prevent the spread of the disease, there is a serious risk that it will enter the EU," Pesonen noted. "This is unacceptable given that black spot is a disease that is not present in Europe and its presence could have a bad impact on the citrus sector in producer countries.

"The EU citrus fruit sector is important both from an economic and social point of view," he added. "Without stronger action, 600,000 ha and 5m tonnes of produce are put at risk. The EU is also a net exporter of citrus fruit and introduction of the disease in the EU would cause us to lose exports and jeopardise our exporting position."

