

**Question for written answer P-002641/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Iratxe García Pérez (S&D)

Subject: Protecting the EU from Citrus Black Spot

The high risk to European citrus plantations of contagion with *Guignardia Citricarpa* (Citrus Black Spot), due to the importation of contaminated fruit, has been confirmed by the European Food Safety Authority's scientific opinion of 21 February 2014.

In recent years, infected fruit has reached the EU in consignments imported from South Africa, particularly in 2013: 38 consignments of contaminated citrus fruit were intercepted, some of them after the Spanish Government had announced palliative and precautionary measures. Despite this situation, the Commission only proposed to partially close the border, once the import season from South Africa was already over.

In view of the fact that the EU's citrus fruit sector plays a fundamental social, environmental and economic role and is a source of employment, particularly for young people and women, in regions which have been hard hit by the economic crisis and unemployment, and bearing in mind that any introduction of this disease would lead to up to 500 000 hectares of citrus orchards being uprooted in the EU, at huge public expense, does the Commission not think there are more than enough reasons to immediately close our borders to citrus fruit from South Africa before the start of that country's next export season to the EU, thereby avoiding a repeat of what happened in 2013?

Does the Commission not think that the protection of plant health in Community crops in any sector, and the start of the European single market, should outweigh the commercial interests of those operators who seem happy to continue endangering the citrus sector in order to pursue other goals?