

**Question for written answer E-014522/2015  
to the Commission**  
Rule 130  
**Miguel Viegas (GUE/NGL)**

Subject: Pest affecting stone pine trees

Stone pines cover an area of 176 000 hectares in Portugal. This is the species that has recorded the highest rise since the 2005 national forestry inventory, with a 54% increase.

In the past four years, however, the Portuguese pine nut shelling sector, which used to process around 120 000 tonnes of pine cones per year and produced around 4 000 tonnes of pine nuts (around 90% of which was intended for export), has seen its production drop to less than half. There has been a significant decline in the number of kernels extracted from each pine cone, resulting from the presence of the pest *Leptoglossus occidentalis*, an insect which feeds inside pine cones and which was first detected in Portugal five years ago.

The sector has been losing market share as well as yield, since the price for Portuguese pine nuts is currently rising owing to higher costs and much lower production, and domestic produce is having to compete with lower quality produce from China and Pakistan that enters the market at much lower prices.

Is the Commission aware of this situation?

If so, what has it been doing in response to this problem?

What Community support might be mobilised to assist the Portuguese authorities in combating this pest?