



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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Commissioner Andriukaitis
C/O UKREP

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Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for our conversation yesterday. It was good to talk and I very much look forward to meeting soon.

As we discussed, protecting plant health is a key priority for me. *Xylella fastidiosa* has already had major impacts in parts of the EU so, as I highlighted in our conversation, preventing further spread is of paramount importance. To that end, I am grateful that the Commission has introduced emergency legislation and has initiated a further review in response to recent developments.

Nevertheless, I am very concerned about the increase in findings in the EU, most recently in mainland Spain, which raises serious questions about the robustness of the EU's present arrangements and the wisdom of allowing high risk species to move across borders unchecked. With the ongoing risk of infected plants being moved to new areas, it is vital we move swiftly to strengthen our protection, including through increased testing and setting higher biosecurity standards for production. Foremost, this needs to address the real threat from the hosts most commonly associated with recent outbreaks, and which are traded in large volumes around the EU (most notably, *Polygala myrtifolia*, *Olea europaea*, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, *Lavandula* sp, *Nerium oleander* and *Prunus dulcis*).

In light of what is at stake, I have asked my officials to explore national measures to mitigate the imminent danger of *Xylella fastidiosa* being introduced into the UK, which could be introduced in the event that the appropriate level of protection is not forthcoming through the EU review. This may include enhanced import requirements for plants from other EU countries or a suspension of imports of high risk species.

You mentioned that a vote on the updated Emergency Decision is anticipated later in September. Please do let me know if the UK can provide any additional support and I would very much welcome an update on the Commission's position before the vote.

With every good wish,

Michael Gove