Dear Commissioner,

We welcome you in Apulia and are happy that this occasion represents the ideal moment to **fill the gap of the communication shortfall** that has taken place, for different reasons, with the European Commission.

In the letters and documents that we have sent to your Cabinet and the to Directorate General for Health, we have first underlined **how the Xylella fastidiosa outbreak in Salento was not really the natural calamity of devastating dimensions that had been feared by Italian Authorities.**

The phenomenon of trees drying out concerned for sure many olive trees. But its causes are multiple and do not only pertain to Xylella fastidiosa.

**We believe a more rigorous and open scientific approach** should have been taken, both by the Italian authorities and the European institutions and organisms. A number of scientific studies point to the complexity of calamity we are dealing with. And EFSA as well underlines that it is not to underestimate the action of the different pests that have been found on the interested trees. They clearly conclude to the fact that the massive cutting of trees is not the only solution available to prevent further spreading of the bacteria.

**The alert launched by Italian Authorities has revealed excessive** and not matching reality, **both for the diagnosis of the phenomenon** (many scientists have not shared the idea that trees should be cut) **and its geographical scope**, at first was evaluated in a million of olive trees to eradicate.

This alert, that has launched the quarantine, has seemed so suspect that **Lecce Magistrates have taken the decision to investigate it thoroughly.**

During the past months, we have communicated to Your Cabinet not only our perplexities and doubts but we have also provided **several studies and researches that support our thesis.**

**a) the need for a more thorough analysis of the Xylella** issue and

b) the need to carry on systematically experiments that several research centres are already conducting in the Region. The Commission, in its scientific organisms, has the duty to take them into consideration. And we are ready to show to them to you or your services.

**This is a major development and we think it should be fully taken into account when deciding what the best policy is to address Xylella fastidiosa in this region.**

**If there is a reasonable doubt that the decision taken goes far beyond what is necessary to deal with the problem, we believe it is the duty of all authorities concerned to put its execution on hold and study the alternatives that are available.**

It is extremely important, dear Commissioner, that now the ground is cleared **from all methodology mistakes** committed so far.

On 6th July, the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry has published the most updated data on Xylella. Well, from this report it is self-evident that there **is no trace of the feared pandemic as Xylella would have been found in only the 1.8% of the trees tested.**

**Xylella has been found in an insignificant number of plants and it has not spread beyond the plants tested. What has spread, is the drying out, which is another pathology and calls into causes other pests.**

Certainly, European quarantine alert measures are applied also in the presence of a single case of Xyella, BUT it is very important for the European Commission and for the interested Member States **to ascertain that the bacteria has not caused any olive tree decimation**.

**It has not spread and most of all, it has reacted positively to the different cures tested and executed**.

Good agronomical practices have revealed an excellent instrument of contrast to combat the drying out.

The different **containment proposals** together with the **the scientific research on the field show that the latest Commission Decision needs to be reviewed as soon as possible**.

Our Region has heavily suffered from the quarantine measures and the embargo on plants, and **we believe, together with experts, researchers, universities and operators of the field that time has come for a change in methodology and strategy. We hope that you visited the hundreds of trees that have been successfully cured!**

**Peacelink asks that the European Commission reviews with urgency its latest Decision** on the issue and that the European Commission communicate to Member States that the Xylella outbreak in Apulia in not a pandemic, it **does not need further eradications, considering that the bacteria has not been found again and that trials and tests on the ground have given incredible results**.

We trust, dear Commissioner, that the European Commission will now dedicate all its efforts to putting in place an important research project that consolidates and strengthens the already existing ones.

**It is part of the Commission’s obligations and duties to remain attentive to those evolutions that touch and even modify issues that the Commission takes care of, and it is part of the Member States rights to produce additional information that can even modify the already existing European decisions.**

It is a unique occasion, for the European Commission, to be able to update worldwide scientific knowledge on Xylella fastidiosa.

As the Commission knows, the strategy of eradication and the treatment of vectors insects has failed, as EFSA reports and so far, in Italy, there is no clear evidence of the fact that the transmission of the bacteria passes by the vector-insect.

There are several incongruities on the issue of the effective **infectivity and transmission of *Xylella fastidiosa* by *Philaenus spumarius*** and these cannot be disregarded.

There is a big delay on the evaluation of the pathogenicity tests, at the basis of which there is no epidemiological evaluation.

The strategy seems to be very poor and theoretical, so far, and we ask that a more thorough consideration of all involved and relevant factors can finally be realised. **On the basis of which scientific certainty, is the Commission imposing a decision?**

**EFSA reports are rather critical and put in light different aspects that do not support Commission’s decisions.**

We need you to support us, to take vision and to acknowledge that what happens in Apulia is far different and needs **a new and clear strategy that takes into consideration experimentation and cures** that have been carried on in the field as the one conducted by Prof. Scortichini of the Fruit Tree Unit Research Center.

It is high time that the Commission abandons the uncertainty in which it has taken its decisions and steps into the issue with a new methodological strategy.

Koch’s postulates are based also on the epidemiological analysis and this reminds us that before any EU decision, there must be a clear strategy to support it, based on evident scientific bases, which here are missing.

**It is inevitable to conclude that the epidemiology causal to the relation between Xylella and trees drying out syndrome is not ascertained and that the cutting of trees is, at best, useless**. There no incontrovertible scientific evidence supports that the EU decision is the best to contain the bacteria.

Let the witch hunt be stopped and let voice be given to the plurality of science!