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Press Release

New Copa and Cogeca figures estimate good EU olive and olive oil harvest, despite spread of *Xylella fastidiosa*

New figures released by Copa and Cogeca today estimate a good EU olive and olive oil harvest this year, despite the spread of the disease *Xylella fastidiosa*

Speaking at a press event, new Chairman of the EU table olives and olive oil working party Vasilis Pyrgiotis said “The EU is a major player in the global olive sector, accounting for 70% of global olive oil production and 32% of the global table olives production. EU olives and olive oil exports have tripled in the last 20 years, boosting the success of the Mediterranean cuisine”.

«This year a good olive oil harvest across the EU is estimated, with positive trends seen in most countries. In Italy, it is estimated to be up 75%, compared to 2016 which was a low harvest, to reach 320, 000 tonnes. Whilst in Greece, a 46% rise is forecast totaling 285, 000 t. In Portugal, it is predicted to climb by 58% to reach 110, 000 tonnes and by 64% in France to total 5000 tonnes. Only Spain might see its yield decrease by 14% with total output estimated at 1,1 M tons, due to drought, but it would still rank number one producer worldwide. World olive oil production is on the rise with an estimated output of 2,854,000 tons, which is up 12% compared to last year », he stressed.

« A very good year for table olives is also foreseen, rising by 58% to reach 1, 260 tonnes in France. In Greece, it is estimated to rise by 30% at 235, 000 tonnes and by 20% in Italy at 48, 000 tonnes. While in Spain a fall of 13% compared to last year is foreseen, due to drought, reaching 520,000 tons. World olive production is projected at a record 2,951,500 tons, up by 3% », he added.

Xylella fastidiosa is however continuing to spread through Europe. The disease is now present in four Member States affecting very different crops – Italy, France, Germany, Spain. I consequently welcome an international scientific conference on European research into *Xylella fastidiosa* in Spain this November. The conference is organised jointly by EFSA, the University of the Balearic Islands, the Euphresco network for phytosanitary research coordination and funding, the EU Horizon 2020 projects POnTE and XF-ACTORS, and the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD). I hope that this will help to eradicate this disease which is devastating our crops, he said.

Another priority for me during my two year mandate is to help rebalance the sector. Olive production is growing rapidly in Europe and worldwide, boosted by a positive image and a rise in consumption. But the structure of the industry prevents olive producers from benefiting from the full value of production. Profit margins are really constrained. A more balanced market could be achieved by increasing the sector’s competitiveness and highlighting its benefits by carrying out promotion campaigns. Smart farming could also benefit the sector, he explained.

I will also continue to monitor trade talks to ensure that the olive sector is not used a bargaining chip in the talks. Finally, it will be a priority for me to ensure that we get a good deal for the olive and olive oil sector in the future Common Agricultural Policy”, he concluded

Vasilis Pyrgiotis comes from a family of olive growers in Crete and is head of the olive division of the newly established Greek organisation Gaia Epicheirein which represents 71 agri-cooperatives and associations, and over 150, 000 farmers working across the territory. He will be supported by Vice Chair Anna Rufolo from the Italian Agriculture Confederation CIA.

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