

Bacterium from the USA Hits Italy's Olive Trees

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

You better stock up on olive oil.

Xylella fastidiosa, a [bacterium](#) in the class [Gammaproteobacteria](#), is an important [plant](#) pathogen that is known to cause **phoney peach disease** in the [southern United States](#), [bacterial leaf scorch](#), **oleander leaf scorch**, and **Pierce's disease**, as well as recently **citrus variegated chlorosis disease**(CVC) in [Brazil](#), where it was introduced from the USA.

Apart from earlier, [unconfirmed interceptions on grapevine material imported from the USA](#) (EPPO Reporting Service 500/02, 505/13), the disease vector was absent in Europe, though infamous German-born [global corporation BAYER](#) already has a computer code for it: **XYLEFA**.

Now it has hit for the first time Europe, having been [reported already in in mid-October 2013](#).

But the real question is, how does it come that now already 800,000 often centuries-old olive-trees in Salento, Puglia, are infected by *Xylella fastidiosa*?

Did the Italian and European authorities sleep for 10 months or was the [bacterium](#) inoculated artificially over a wide range at the [same time](#)? Though the vector is spread by [insects](#), the epidemic has reportedly already cost producers US\$335m (€250m, £200m) - a figure expected to rise.

The [growers](#) shall now be forced to destroy many [trees](#) in the worst-afflicted [areas](#) when an emergency decree comes finally into force next week. The EU bureaucrats and their delaying "study-teams" certainly did sleep.

'There will be a genuine "cordon sanitaire" of 8,000 hectares where it will be obligatory to destroy the trees', stated Angelo Corsetti, a spokesman for Coldiretti, the national agricultural organisation.

It seems that nobody is concerned with a thorough investigation how the infestation started and [only the food-price speculators rub their hands](#).

Will European [vineyards be the next target](#)?

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