

**Question for written answer E-001431/2024  
to the Commission**  
Rule 144  
**Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)**

**Subject:** The environmental crisis, exploitation of labour and activities of criminal organisations in the intensive agriculture strip in Ragusa province (Sicily)

The situation in the *'fascia trasformata'* intensive agriculture strip in Ragusa province<sup>1</sup> calls for urgent and decisive action to be taken to combat illegal practices, some of which are backed by criminal groups, so as to restore respect for EU environmental and civil rights legislation.

The entire strip shows signs of serious environmental degradation, exacerbated by criminal organisations which are undermining legitimate agricultural operators. The area, which stretches tens of kilometres, is experiencing systematic violation of a host of EU laws, with access to the sea being blocked and hazardous waste being buried in the now-infamous 'plastic dunes'.

These illicit activities, including the incineration of waste<sup>2</sup> and the mammoth use of pesticides<sup>3</sup>, are polluting the soil and aquifers, thereby threatening public health.

These illegal waste disposal activities are being managed by criminal gangs, which are also involved in labour exploitation, as shown by the Catania District Anti-Mafia Directorate (DDA)<sup>4</sup> and documented in photos and reports by the Regional Environmental Protection Agency (ARPA) and the Prefect's Office.

Given the serious and persistent nature of these breaches, can the Commission indicate:

1. What specific actions could be taken to restore respect for environmental law in this area?
2. Whether it considers these breaches of EU law to be systematic<sup>5</sup>?
3. What incentives and assistance could be provided to the competent authorities to safeguard health, workers' rights and the environment<sup>6</sup>?

Submitted: 26.7.2024

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<sup>1</sup> The area concerned lies in the municipalities of Acate, Comiso, Ispica, Ragusa, Santa Croce Camerina and Vittoria.

<sup>2</sup> 'Fumaroles' as local residents call them.

<sup>3</sup> Some of which is illegally imported from countries outside Europe.

<sup>4</sup> 'Plastic free' operation of 2019 <https://direzioneeinvestigativaantimafia.interno.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Rel-Sem-I-2023.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2024-000917-ASW\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2024-000917-ASW_EN.html).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/lotta-alle-fumarole-ciaveterottoipolmomi>.