

helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

25 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Rapid Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) on *Diaporthe sojae*

I am writing to seek your views on a UK Pest Risk Analysis for *Diaporthe sojae*. A link to the rapid PRA can be found at the website given below:

<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/pests-and-diseases/pest-risk-analyses/>

We would welcome your views and comments on the PRA and the proposals for future action.

In submitting any comments you may wish to focus on the summary, key uncertainties and conclusion sections of the risk assessments and to consider the following:

- Are any factual corrections required?
- Your view on the appropriateness of the suggested proposals for future actions?
- Can you provide any additional information (or links to other sources of information) that may help address uncertainty identified in the assessment/management measures?
- Are there any risks that have not been adequately considered?
- Have you reviewed the risk assessment and consider that you have nothing further to add?

This review applies to the UK and is being conducted by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, with the agreement of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Government. The objective of this consultation is to gather views from all interested sectors on the UK position. We will take all comments made into account in developing the UK position.

Background

Diaporthe sojae is a fungus that primarily causes stem and pod blight on *Glycine max* (soybean). It is a weak pathogen of soybean that can be transmitted by infected seeds and overwinters to infect future soybean crops in field stubble. It causes lesions on stems which weaken the plant, and infects pods at late stages of growth, reducing seed quality.

The pathogen is absent from Great Britain and listed as a provisional quarantine pest. A PRA has been undertaken to decide its future status in legislation.

The primary pathway of entry identified is soybean seeds for planting which is rated moderately likely to be a source of introduction with medium confidence. The pathways of plants for planting (excluding seed) and used farm machinery have been rated unlikely with medium and high confidence (respectively) while soil/ growing medium and plants for consumption are highly unlikely. While the rating for soil comes with high confidence, the rating for plant material for consumption has low confidence due to a lack of information.

It is likely with high confidence that *Diaporthe sojae* would establish outdoors in GB in soybean crops as our climate is comparable with other regions where the pest is present. It is unlikely with medium confidence to establish under protection.

Diaporthe sojae could cause reduction of yield, unmarketable seed and reduction of quality/value. It would also require a significant change of practices from UK industry to manage should it arrive. However, in the USA it is one of the less damaging pathogens of soybean compared to other organisms of concern within the region. None of these organisms are present in GB and without these other pressures it is not clear if it would have the same impact in the UK. Therefore, the economic impact has been rated small with low confidence. While it is likely to infect some weeds, evidence is lacking so environmental impact is rated as very small with low confidence. Social impact has been rated very small with high confidence as soybean is not culturally significant or a common plant grown in gardens or allotments in the UK.

The endangered area is currently the south and southwest of England where the vast majority of soybean is currently grown. The potential range of spread could extend into southeast England and south Wales if soybean production were to expand.

Eradication of the pest would not be possible as it remains dormant overwinter and could spread to other plants in the field margins. Statutory action could be used to mitigate against infected seed imports, however sourcing seed from UK stock would be the most effective way to prevent the disease from entering the PRA area. If it were to establish, it can be managed by a combination of deep tillage, crop rotation with a non-host such as maize (*Zea mays*) or grains, planting resistant varieties, using potassium fertilisers and selective harvesting at the optimal time.

Currently fungicides are not a viable option for controlling the disease. However, authorisation to use effective fungicides approved for bean could be sought in the future.

Recommendations for action

Whilst *D. sojae* does affect yield and seed quality, it does not cause crop failure and management options are available. In the USA it has a smaller financial impact on growers than many other pests and diseases of soybean. Therefore, the recommendation is to deregulate *Diaporthe sojae*. This is in line with *Diaporthe caulivora* (stem canker of soybean) which is part of the same complex and was deregulated and removed as an RNQP in 2022. This change would only apply to Plant Health Regulations and would not change the requirements of the Seed Marketing Regulations 2011, where *D. sojae* would remain an RNQP on seed to be marketed and RNQP requirements would have to be met in order for seed to be certified.

All responses should be sent to plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk

Responses should be received by **17 January 2025**.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be made available to the public on request, in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs)

If you do not wish your response, including your name, contact details and any other personal information, to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note that if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, this will not count as a confidentiality request. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for the information under freedom of information legislation. However, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

Yours faithfully

Richard McIntosh
Assistant Chief Plant Health Officer
Defra

T: +44 (0)208 026 2396

M: +44 (0)7767 357817

richard.mcintosh@defra.gov.uk