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[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

15 December 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

## Rapid Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) on *Neodiprion abietis* (the balsam fir sawfly)

I am writing to seek your views on a UK Pest Risk Analysis for *Neodiprion abietis*. 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

*Neodiprion abietis* (the balsam fir sawfly) is a sawfly native to North America that attacks coniferous species, including fir, spruce, and pine. Described as a serious pest in Canada, *N. abietis* feeds on host needles, leading to defoliation, reduced growth, and mortality of the host plant. Historically, outbreaks in Canada are localised and periodically last 3-4 years however, in recent years, the outbreaks are larger scale and last much longer. It is expected that this pest could establish in the UK and cause significant damage.

Entry via plants for planting, host branches, cut trees or natural spread is rated very unlikely with high confidence. Hitchhiking on non-host plants, as previously intercepted in the Netherlands, is rated as unlikely, with medium confidence. Establishment outdoors in the UK is rated likely with medium confidence as the current distribution spans climates which are similar to the UK.

The economic impact was rated medium, given that a pest outbreak could impact survival or growth of known host trees. A low confidence was provided with this rating, as there is some uncertainty surrounding the host range of the balsam fir sawfly.

There is a significant risk that if *Neodiprion abietis* entered the UK, it would become established outdoors and cause high losses to the forestry industry via its impact on coniferous hosts.

This PRA concludes that the pathways for entry range from unlikely to very unlikely, mainly since *N. abietis* currently resides in countries outside of Europe, so natural spread is very unlikely and host plants, including plants for planting, branches and cut trees, are prohibited from being imported into Great Britain and Northern Ireland, under the existing legislation. It therefore appears that the main pathways are currently being addressed by the existing regulations. However, this pest has been found hitchhiking on non-hosts. This pathway is difficult to regulate and the introduction of specific import requirements is generally ineffective but listing the pest as a GB quarantine pest without specific import requirements would mean that by issuing a phytosanitary certificate, exporting countries would be attesting to freedom from this pest.

## Recommendations for action

Statutory action in the event of findings of this pest is appropriate. The listing of the pest as a GB quarantine pest without specific import requirements, is proposed.

All responses should be sent to [plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk](mailto:plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk)

Responses should be received by **8 March 2024**.

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

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