Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government
Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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

4 December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Rapid Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) on four species of *Euwallacea fornicatus sensu lato* and their symbiotic fungi

I am writing to seek your views on a UK Pest Risk Analysis for the ambrosia beetles *E. fornicatior, E. fornicatus, E. kuroshio* and *E. perbrevis,* along with their associated fungi. 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

This PRA covers four species of ambrosia beetle, which are a species complex, and their associated symbiotic fungi. The taxonomy of the beetles has been revised several times, but now appears to be approaching some stability, though there remains the possibility of undescribed cryptic species within the current species delineation. New fungal species within the main symbiont group (the ambrosia *Fusarium* clade) are also still being isolated and described. All four beetle species are native to south and east Asia, and three have become pests outside their native range. Invasive populations have been found in several countries in the Americas, Hawaii, Israel and South Africa. There have also been outbreaks in Western Australia and mainland Europe which are being controlled by the relevant plant health authorities. These include glasshouse outbreaks, several of which have been successfully eradicated and one where eradication is ongoing.

The beetles feed on a very wide range of hosts, mostly broadleaved woody species, but there have been a few records on other hosts such as palms, bamboo and conifers. Unusually for ambrosia beetles, they are capable of attacking apparently healthy trees. As ambrosia beetles, they create tunnels in wood and have symbiotic relationships with a range of fungal species in the ambrosia *Fusarium* clade and others. The fungi colonise the tunnels and feed on the wood, and the beetles feed on the fungus and not the host directly. Woody plants can be divided into three broad groups in terms of their suitability as hosts for *E. fornicatus s.l.* It should be noted that these categories are not fixed and some hosts assigned to one category are later found to belong to a different one.

a) Reproductive hosts allow the symbiotic fungi to grow and the relevant beetle species to complete its entire lifecycle
b) Non-reproductive hosts may be attacked by the beetle, fungal growth may occur, but these hosts do not allow the whole beetle lifecycle to be completed
c) Plants not recorded as hosts have not showed evidence of beetle attack or, in some cases, may not allow the fungal symbiont to grow

The scoring in this PRA is complex, as in some instances it was decided that ratings differ according to beetle species, but at other times the same rating was considered to apply to all four species. Overall, entry on plants for planting was moderately likely for reproductive hosts, with other planting material and various wood products considered lower risk. Establishment outdoors was considered moderately likely or unlikely depending on the species, but establishment in heated botanical glasshouses and other similar indoor environments was considered very likely. High impacts can occur in the native range, mostly on urban street trees, though quantified data are scarce. Impacts outdoors in the UK would be smaller, as the cooler climate would allow fewer generations even in the warmest parts of the UK. Individual heated glasshouses growing mature or semi-mature trees could have considerable damage if the beetle was to be introduced into such an environment.

Risk management options include continued exclusion to prevent the beetles entering the country. Eradication of glasshouse outbreaks has proved possible in several countries in mainland Europe. Control of outbreaks in the wider environment is very challenging as the

beetles live hidden inside trees and could use a very wide range of species. Various control options to limit beetle and/or fungal populations are used in the current range, including attractants, pesticides, pruning and felling.

Recommendations for action in Great Britain

Maintain the current listing for *E. fornicatus s.l.* as quarantine pests under the subfamily listing of “non-European Scolytinae”, but do not specifically list *E. fornicatus s.l.* as quarantine pests in Great Britain. The current provisional quarantine pest listing for the beetles would be removed. This will allow action to be taken if the pest is detected, but would not involve any specific measures on named hosts in the legislation (for example, requirements in Annex 7).

The existing host measures mitigating against non-European Scolytinae are for conifers which are not hosts of *E. fornicatus s.l.* In future, it would be worth considering mitigating the risk of hardwood trees for non-European Scolytinae. The risk posed by *E. fornicatus s.l.* to the UK is not considered to be high enough to use this species group to justify any changes to the current legislation. Therefore, regulation of hardwoods for non-European Scolytinae would need to be based on additional evidence, and are not justified on the basis of this PRA only.

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

Responses should be received by **26 February 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