



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs



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24 February 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

Response to the UK policy review for *Phytophthora pluvialis*

Thank you for submitting views and comments on the addendum to the Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) and proposals for future action for *Phytophthora pluvialis*. This letter is to notify you of the outcome.

Recommendations

The UK Plant Health Risk Group (PHRG) review presented the following recommendation:

The additional information gained from the research projects carried out over the last couple of years has altered some of the risk assessment judgements on this pest since the 2022 PRA. Its distribution, means of natural spread and lower impacts than were originally thought mean that there is much more confidence in concluding that this pest does not meet the criteria to be a Quarantine Pest (QP) for Great Britain, and statutory action should no longer be taken.

Background

Phytophthora pluvialis is a fungus-like pathogen which affects mainly conifer species with known hosts including Douglas fir and tanoak in the USA, and radiata pine and Douglas fir in New Zealand.

In August 2021, the first outbreak of *P. pluvialis* in Great Britain - and Europe - was identified on a stand of western hemlock in Cornwall and a rapid PRA was undertaken. Due to uncertainties, no final judgement was made on whether it met the criteria for QP status in Great Britain. It was agreed that it would be treated as a QP for regulatory purposes and management options would be put in place in a precautionary manner whilst a number of research projects were initiated to try and answer the key areas of uncertainty and improve our evidence base.

We now have this new evidence which has been collated into an updated addendum to the PRA and used to assess *P. pluvialis* against the QP criteria.



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Summary of responses

Two responses were received, from:

- The HTA (Horticultural Trades Association)
- Confor (Confederation of Forest Industries)

Both respondents agreed with the conclusions of the addendum to the PRA, and that it represented a realistic appraisal of the risk from this pest.

The HTA agreed with all the actions and proposals made in the addendum.

Confor raised a number of other points in relation to policy and management planning, which are detailed below

Key concerns and government response

- Confor considered that there remains a need for continued research to improve understanding of the pathogen's epidemiology and future spread, to help take into account any changes that could trigger more severe impacts.

Response: We thank Confor for taking the time to respond to the PRA addendum and confirm that despite the conclusion that *P. pluvialis* does not meet the criteria to be treated as a QP, it will remain flagged as a priority for research on the UK Plant Health Risk Register.

- Confor also considered that further research to understand the potential for *P. pluvialis* to hybridise or interact with other *Phytophthora* species is required.

Response: As a means of oversight to monitor for potential changes in its disease expression in trade, *P. pluvialis* will continue to be monitored through routine horizon scanning and surveillance activities.

Phytophthoras do have a track record of hybridisation, with the alder *Phytophthora* complex being the best-known example. Overall, this is thought to be most likely under conditions of environmental disturbance, where multiple *Phytophthora* species are brought into close contact and encounter a range of hosts that they wouldn't usually, which is probably most likely to occur in a nursery setting. Even then, however, most hybrids are likely to be less fit than their parent species and probably only rarely survive. As we have not had any *P. pluvialis* detections in nurseries, this may reduce the likelihood further.

- Confor strongly supports continued monitoring and surveillance, to detect any changes in behaviour, host impacts, or expansion at an early stage, to allow for management responses.

Response: The Plant health service continually monitor wider environment sites through a number of surveillance programmes. For example, *P. pluvialis* was first detected in GB via an aerial survey flight as part of the *P. ramorum* surveillance programme. Therefore, a level of oversight will be maintained in wider environment sites despite there being no

targeted *P. pluvialis* surveillance allowing for changes in disease expression to be monitored.

Additionally, as highlighted above, *P. pluvialis* will also be monitored through routine horizon scanning and surveillance activities to maintain oversight in case there is a change in its expression in trade.

Next steps

The responses received were supportive of the conclusions of the UK PHRG, and on this basis Great Britain will no longer take statutory action on this pest.

I would like to thank those responding for taking the time to submit views on the stakeholder engagement. Your comments have been very valuable in helping to develop a policy position on this pest. I hope this letter demonstrates the reasoning behind our decision and that we have sought to find a solution which reflects the current position and the views expressed from different stakeholders. We will be pleased to continue engaging with you about this pest.

If you have any views about how this review was handled, or its outcome, please let me know.

Yours faithfully,

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Recipients: Organisations listed below (excludes responses from private individuals)

The HTA (Horticultural Trades Association)

Confor (Confederation of Forest Industries)