



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



Department of  
Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

[helpline@defra.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gov.uk)

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

12<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

## Rapid Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) on *Fusarium foetens*

I am writing to seek your views on a UK Pest Risk Analysis for *Fusarium foetens*. 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 stakeholder engagement 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.



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

## Background

*Fusarium foetens* is a wilt pathogen of begonias (*Begonia*), especially Hiemalis group begonias (*Begonia x hiemalis*) that are a hybrid between *B. socotrana* and *B. tuberhybrida*. These begonias are grown primarily as potted flowering plants for both indoor and outdoor use in spring and summer. The pathogen is not present in Great Britain but has been intercepted on numerous occasions. It is currently unregulated, though statutory action is taken on findings on *Begonia* plants for planting as a precaution.

This rapid PRA shows: That *Fusarium foetens* is a wilt pathogen of a subset of begonia species and rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*). The pathogen causes a lethal wilt disease of Hiemalis begonia and is found primarily in commercial glasshouse facilities where these plants are raised from plugs to flowering. Plants infected with *F. foetens* are unable to be sold due to the severity of the disease. Not all begonia hybrids are susceptible to the disease and most outdoor varieties of begonia, tuberous begonia and seedling begonias, are not susceptible. *Fusarium foetens* has also been identified as the causal agent of a wilt disease of rooibos in a limited growing region of South Africa, though this disease is not as severe as the wilt caused on begonias and is likely to co-occur with other wilt pathogens. There are no other reliable reports of this pathogen infecting other host plant species.

## Recommendations for action

The PRA concluded that it was **very unlikely** with medium confidence that this pathogen would establish outdoors. This pathogen primarily impacts large commercial growers of indoor *Begonia* and *Begonia* hybrids, that regularly import plantlets on plugs from the EU. The potential economic impact of this pathogen was rated as **small** with high confidence. Risks associated with the disease caused by *F. foetens* can be managed by proper monitoring and removal of plants showing symptoms in plant nurseries before sale. These inspections are already done regularly by growers to monitor and control a number of severe wilt diseases. Therefore, the recommendation is not to regulate *Fusarium foetens*.

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

Responses should be received by **4<sup>th</sup> September 2025**.

Information provided in response to this stakeholder engagement, 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 stakeholder engagement. 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](mailto:richard.mcintosh@defra.gov.uk)