Brussels, 20th July 2016

Recommendation of the Working Group on the Annexes of the Council Directive 2000/29/EC – Section II – Listing of Harmful Organisms as regards the future listing of *Scirrhia acicola* [1]

Current regulatory status

Scirrhia acicola (preferred scientific name *Mycosphaerella dearnessii*, its teleomorph) is a fungus regulated as a harmful organism under Annex II, Part A, Section I of Council Directive 2000/29/EC on plants of *Pinus* L., other than fruit and seeds. *Scirrhia acicola* is the anamorph name and only this stage has been found in the EU and the teleomorph has not been reported outside the southern USA.

For imports, there must be an official statement that no symptoms of *Scirrhia acicola* have been observed at the place of production since the beginning of the last complete cycle of vegetation. The only hosts are *Pinus* spp. and these are prohibited from non-European countries.

However, the requirement for absence of symptoms does not always ensure absence of the pest, mainly because of the possibility of symptomless contamination of planting material.

Identity of the pest

The pathogen is a single taxonomic entity and reliable methods are available for its detection and differentiation from other related fungal species. However, on the basis of inspection of symptomatic plants it is difficult to distinguish between this species and the more EU-widespread *Scirrhia pini* and this would make control difficult if the latter was deregulated.

Distribution of the pest

The distribution of *Scirrhia acicola* in the EU is not clear due to difficulties over visually detecting it by inspection and separating it from the similar species *Scirrhia pini*, but it has been recorded in 8 MS, mainly as localised infections. A first finding was also reported by Portugal in 2016. Due to the necessity of laboratory confirmation based on the cultural, morphological and molecular characters of the anamorphs, it is possible the fungus has been under-recorded due to its similarity to the more widespread *S pini.*

Potential for establishment and spread in the PRA area

Only *Pinus* spp. are hosts and these are widespread throughout the EU area. Following establishment, the pathogen has the potential to spread by movement of infected *Pinus* plants for planting or locally by splash dispersal or washed off onto neighbouring plants, by insects or on forestry equipment. Infection can occur over a wide range of temperatures however it appears cold winters but warm summers are required which may be less favourable for development in northern MS. Introduction of the teleomorph into the EU in plants from areas where it is present (currently only southern USA), this could introduce sexual recombination, so potentially increasing virulence and adaptability. Introduction of the teleomorph stage is also likely to spread the pathogen over greater distances due to the production of forcefully discharged, wind-blown ascospores.

[1] Scientific basis for the recommendation: Prima phacie project (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/supporting/pub/319e.htm) for *Scirrhia acicola* (Mycosphaerella dearnessii)

The pest can infect all *Pinus* spp. and host plants for planting can be one of the pathways for the introduction into, and spread within, new areas. Prima phacie states that the pathogen is reported from several MS to cause needle blight and premature defoliation in pine trees growing in natural and urban areas, but so far has not been detected in pine nurseries, seed orchards or plantations.

Potential for consequences in the PRA area

Prima phacie describes the potential entry and transfer to the EU to be estimated by the BBN model as medium (46% likelihood) to high (30%) and potential consequences as low (50% likelihood) to medium (50%) and the overall risk posed as low (59%) to medium (26%). *Scirrhia acicola* has no negative impact on the biodiversity as it only causes needle blight and premature defoliation in mature trees, however it is suggested if it might have a negative impact on the environment if numerous fungicide applications were required in the event of nursery outbreaks in young pine seedlings.

These do not appear significant; however introduction of new genotypes if the teleomorph stage was ever introduced may make this change. It is not clear, however, if the introduction of teleomorph stage would significantly increase of overall disease impact, considering the equivalent stage of *Scirrhia pini* is already present throughout the EU. Hosts from where the teleomorph stage occurs, are however prohibited from entry.

Recommendation

The Working Group concludes that this fungus meets the definition of Regulated Non-Quarantine Pest. In particular, plants for planting are considered to be the main pathway for long distance spread and the impact on the intended use of the plants.

Although the limited distribution in the EU, the Working Group considers that eradication measures are not feasible in forests. This is confirmed by the wide distribution of *Scirrhia pini* (*Dothistroma septosporum* and *Dothistroma pini*) in the EU. Furthermore, the impact is only considered to be important only on some specific species.

A common strategy is needed between *S. acicula, Dothistroma septosporum,* and *Dothistroma pini* due to the difficulty of their specific identification. It is also important that Annex III prohibitions on import remain in place to prevent introduction of the teleomorph stage from non-European Countries.

Lastly, specific requirements on internal movements need to be properly developed.