



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

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

26 September 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

## Review of future policy options for *Bemisia tabaci*

I am writing to seek your views on your favoured options for the quarantine whitefly *B. tabaci* (tobacco whitefly). Your responses will be used as part of the evidence to guide future policy.

### Background

Statutory action has been taken in the UK against *B. tabaci* since it was first detected in 1987. It has been found on a range of imported ornamental and edible plants, subject to interception and eradication action. There was a review of UK policy relating to *B. tabaci* in 2011 which concluded that it should remain a quarantine pest. In 2016, additional ornamental plants were added to the list of plants for which import requirements apply. *B. tabaci* can cause damage to a range of plants, but in the UK, the most significant threat it poses is as a vector of plant viruses in protected edible plants including tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers.

### The evidence

The attached document provides evidence relating to the biology and threat posed by *B. tabaci*. This evidence has been gathered from scientific publications, government records of interceptions and outbreaks, online publications and data provided by industry. Some elements of the evidence can be stated with a high degree of confidence, for example, that there are no year-round outdoor populations of *B. tabaci* in the UK. Other important factors are less certain, for example, the likelihood of *B. tabaci* spreading from infested sites with ornamental plants into protected edible crops.



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

## Options

Four different options for future policy have been presented and evaluated. These are:

Option 1: Status quo

Options 2 and 2A: Strengthening of current requirements

Option 3: Re-designate *B. tabaci* as a Regulated Non-Quarantine Pest

Option 4: Stop taking action against *B. tabaci* but maintain measures relating to the viruses it vectors

The implications of maintaining the current policy (Option 1) and the implications of changing to an alternative policy (Options 2 and 2A, 3 and 4) are set out in the consultation document. Options 2 and 2A, 3 and 4 would require new legislation.

Please use the form at the end of this letter to state which of the above policy options you would prefer and explain your choice. In addition, if you have evidence that should have been considered within the consultation document we would be grateful if you could submit this to us.

Any responses should be sent to [plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk](mailto:plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk) by 19 December 2023.

Comments provided in response to this letter, 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 comments. 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)

## Response to the consultation on future policy options for the quarantine whitefly, *Bemisia tabaci*

1	Name of person responding	
2	Company or organisation and nature of business	
3	Are you responding on behalf of a body representing more than one company / organisation?	YES / NO If no please go to question 7
4	How did you gather views before submitting this response	
5	How many people / organisations contributed to this response	
6	Were there differences of opinion	
7	Please rank your preference for the policy options (1 = most favoured; 4 = least favoured)	
	Option 1: Status quo	
	Option 2 and 2A: Strengthening of current requirements	
	Option 3: Re-designate <i>B. tabaci</i> as a Regulated Non-Quarantine Pest	
	Option 4: Stop taking action against <i>B. tabaci</i> but maintain measures relating to the viruses it vectors	
8	Please state your reasons for choosing your favoured policy option (s)	
9	Are there other options that you think should be considered and if so what are they	
10	Do you have any other evidence that you think should have been considered (including evidence on potential economic impacts)?	YES / NO. If Yes please describe below or submit a separate document.

Any responses should be sent to [plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk](mailto:plantpestrisks@defra.gov.uk) by 19 December 2023.