



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Date: 15 February 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inform you of new legislation that will come into force on 4 March 2021, amending the retained Phytosanitary Controls Regulation (Commission Implementing Regulation 2019/2072), to address the plant health threat posed by *Xylella*.

These changes apply GB wide and represent an important step in setting plant health legislation which is tailored to UK risks. The changes have been identified as priorities for improving the UK's plant biosecurity, in response to known threats, thereby protecting UK business, society and the environment in the short term, as well as in the future.

Earlier *Xylella* measures had been developed on the basis of a UK pest risk analysis and in consultation with the Plant Health Advisory Forum and individual businesses. Stakeholders supported the measures. Given the UK's relationship with the EU it has only been possible to introduce such measures as agreed now the transition period has ended, while also taking into account the ongoing risk associated with *Xylella*.

The measures being introduced will be GB wide, following consent from the devolved administrations. These reflect the required measures as regards to the desired level of protection for plants imported from countries and areas where *Xylella* is present, while also avoiding unnecessary new burdens for those countries where *Xylella* is not present. In addition, options are included where there is a high level of assurance that imports are from areas where *Xylella* is not present. The Plant Health Advisory Forum remains supportive of stronger requirements for this disease.

Xylella fastidiosa

Xylella fastidiosa ("*Xylella*") is a bacterium which causes disease in a wide range of woody commercially grown plants such as grapevine, citrus, olive and several species of broadleaf trees widely grown in the UK, as well as many shrubs and herbaceous plants. Outbreaks of the disease have occurred in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Portugal. There is considered to be a particular risk of introducing *Xylella* with olive, almond, lavender, rosemary, coffee and polygala plants, and these are the hosts which would be subject to additional requirements.

Outbreaks in southern Italy have devastated olive production and have had major social and economic impacts. Substantial impacts have been observed elsewhere, both on businesses affected and more generally. The pathogen is not known to be present in the UK, but we remain concerned about the possibility of *Xylella* arriving in the UK on high risk hosts, such as olive, and those plant species commonly

associated with outbreaks in the EU. The long latency period of *Xylella* means that, without additional requirements, it could be carried into non-infected countries via imports of plants, long before the infection is identified.

Xylella is continuing to spread in Europe. In September 2018, *Xylella* was confirmed in three symptomatic olive trees in Belgium, which had originated from Spain in May 2018. Spain has not been able to trace the source of infection. In August 2020, a new outbreak in lavender nurseries in the Occitanie region of France was identified, with further findings associated with that outbreak confirmed subsequently. There have also been further findings in 2020 in Italy and Spain. The uncertain distribution and ongoing findings in other European countries indicate an ongoing risk of disease spread.

We are therefore increasing restrictions and requirements for the import of high risk *Xylella* host plants to reduce the chances that *Xylella* is introduced into GB. The aim of these measures is to enhance the level of protection against the risk of entry of *Xylella* into GB via imported plants.

The current measures on *Xylella fastidiosa* (based on retained EU law) do not address the risks highlighted in the updated Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) available at: <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/pras/Xylella-Draft-PRA.pdf>.

The new measures apply to those countries (including EU Member States) where *Xylella* is known to be present and will include the requirements set out below:

- Only allow imports of *Coffea* (coffee) and *Polygala* from countries where *Xylella* is known not to occur.
- Introduce more stringent requirements for the import of *Lavendula* sp. (lavender), *Nerium oleander*, *Olea europaea* (olive), *Prunus dulcis* (almond), and *Rosmarinus officinalis* (rosemary) from countries where *Xylella* is known to occur. We will allow imports under certain conditions including inspections of the place of production and the surrounding area, testing, pre-export inspections and a one-year quarantine period prior to import.

The existing requirements for high risk plants from countries where *Xylella* is not known to occur will be retained, which include annual official inspection, with sampling and testing of the plants concerned.

A copy of the regulations is available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/uksi/2021/136>. They come into force on 4 March 2021.

The important point to note for businesses is that the relevant plants have been grown in approved premises and, where required, details have been supplied to the UK Plant Health Services by the competent authority of the exporting country, so that the phytosanitary (health) certificate can state the prescribed requirements have been met.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Spence', written in a cursive style.

Professor Nicola Spence
Chief Plant Health Officer for the UK