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31 March 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to UK Pest Risk Analysis on *Xylella fastidiosa*

Thank you for submitting views on the development of a UK PRA (Pest Risk Analysis) for *Xylella fastidiosa*. This letter is to notify you of the outcome.

Recommendations

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

Some further strengthening of requirements for the import and movement of high risk species should be considered, in response to the new PRA. In addition to the species already covered by additional requirements, these could be extended to all lavender (*Lavandula*) species, as well as rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*). This is because it is highly unlikely that *Lavandula dentata* will be the only higher risk species in this genus and rosemary is associated with the same risk factors as the other species listed.

The aim of any strengthened requirements would be to increase the level of assurance about the disease status of future imports of these host plant species, including mitigating the risk of asymptomatic infected plants being moved (i.e. through imposing a minimum holding period pre-export, to facilitate targeted inspections and testing).

In addition, those species most commonly associated with the risk factors (coffee (*Coffea arabica*) and *Polygala myrtifolia*) could be prohibited. The former has been responsible for previous interceptions in Europe and there have been many outbreaks of the latter, involving different subspecies.

For tree species linked to large scale outbreaks and associated with other risk factors (olive (*Olea europaea*) and almond (*Prunus dulcis*)), imports could be permitted only under stringent derogation conditions. Tighter import requirements could also be introduced for the other species referred to, specifically focused on ensuring that exports take place only from disease free places of production, where the risk of moving infected asymptomatic plants has been effectively mitigated.

Background

Xylella fastidiosa is a plant-pathogenic bacterium which infects a very wide range of plants. It is already heavily regulated to reduce the likelihood of it entering the UK. In some host species, impacts can be severe, and the plant or tree can be killed rapidly. Other hosts have latent infections or may remain asymptomatic (but still be capable of spreading the disease) for several years before succumbing to the bacterium. *Xylella fastidiosa* is native to the Americas but has been spread to countries elsewhere in the world, including parts of Europe. There are several subspecies of *X. fastidiosa*, which have different host ranges. *Xylella fastidiosa* is vectored by a number of xylem-feeding hemipteran insect species, including some which are widespread in the UK. At least parts of the UK are likely to prove suitable for *X. fastidiosa* to establish, but it is unclear what levels of damage it may be able to cause to plants in the UK. The assessment of establishment is highly uncertain, as there are few data about the actual climatic (or other) requirements of *X. fastidiosa*.

Summary of responses

9 responses were received, these were from:

- The Royal Forestry Society
- Hardy Palms
- Cheviot Trees
- Private Individual
- Vitacress
- Boningales
- Johnsons of Whixley
- HTA
- The Woodland Trust
- Scottish Natural Heritage

Most responses did not comment directly on the findings of the PRA itself, but most supported potential national measures to control import of plants to the UK.

Both Cheviot Trees and Boningales supported strong regulation of *Xylella fastidiosa* hosts. Cheviot Trees commented that the PRA does not include the impacts on nurseries of movement restrictions.

Boningales highlighted that the risk of *X. fastidiosa* entering the UK is high on the tree hosts proposed for inclusion in the new regulations.

Key concerns and government response

- Cheviot Trees expressed some concerns over imports of *X. fastidiosa* hosts into the UK. Cheviot Trees noted the long asymptomatic periods of *X. fastidiosa* infected plants and the increased risk they present because of this, and the risks presented to the commercial nursery industry due to potential movement restrictions and control zones.
 - The PRA does include the impacts on nurseries of movement restrictions. This is under potential UK economic impacts and under potential UK social impacts (loss of jobs in the nursery sector).
- Boningales agreed with recommendations and thought that regulation of *X. fastidiosa* hosts should go further, including broadening regulations to include all species within the genus *Lavandula*, and supported an approach of including highlighted host tree species.
 - The PRA does not distinguish host genera or species in its entry ratings for plants for planting, though the narrative supporting the rating does mention some hosts as potentially riskier than others, including all those proposed for our new national requirements.
 - It would be possible to split the entry ratings further, into higher risk and lower risk plants for planting; however, we do not believe this would provide more information. Defining high risk hosts is not straightforward, and there may be a grey area. Splitting the rating will increase the uncertainty and cause confusion.

Next steps

The responses received were generally supportive of the conclusions of the UK PHRG, and on this basis the UK will make no changes to the proposed PRA, but the responses have contributed to decisions on the future policy position for this pathogen, specifically as regards the strengthening of requirements referred to in the recommendation.

I would like to thank those responding for taking the time to submit views on the consultation. 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 recommendation 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 sincerely,

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

Royal Forestry Society

Hardy Palms

Cheviot Trees

Vitacress

Boningales

Johnsons of Whixley

HTA

Woodland Trust

Scottish Natural Heritage