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|  |  | helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  www.gov.uk/defra |
|  | | | **16 November 2016** |

Dear Dr Elliot

# Response to the UK policy review for *Ceratocystis fagacearum* (Oak wilt)*.*

Thank you for submitting views on the development of UK policy position for *Ceratocystis fagacearum*. This letter is to notify you of the outcome.

## Recommendations

The policy review presented the following recommendations:

* Statutory action against findings
* Plant sentinel research to assess any effects on UK native oaks
* Production of a contingency plan

## Background

Twenty-four species of *Quercus* have been recorded as natural hosts of oak wilt. Red oak species (sub-genus *Erythrobalanus*) are highly susceptible, and infected trees typically die within 3 months of symptom expression. Native American white oaks (sub-genus *Lepidabalanus*) are moderately to highly resistant and either may take some years to die, or may even recover from the infection. The European species of white oak *Q. robur* (pedunculate oak), *Q. pubescens* (downy oak) and *Q. petraea* (sessile oak) were tested for susceptibility in arboreta experiments in South Carolina (Clemson) and West Virginia (Morgantown). Despite being white oak species, they developed extensive wilt symptoms similar to those of susceptible red oaks and most were dead or dying within a year of inoculation (70%-100% wilt and dieback). Artificially inoculated hosts are American and European chestnuts (*Castanea dentata* and *C. sativa*), species of chinquapin (*Castanopsis sempervirens*), tanoak (*Lithocarpus*) and several varieties of apple (*Malus*). For further information please refer to the attached risk assessment.

## Summary of responses

One response received from the Woodland Trust supported the recommendation for statutory action, inclusion in sentinel tree research and the development of a pest specific contingency plan.

## Key issues and government response

No specific issues were raised.

## Next steps

The response received supported the conclusions of the UK Plant Health Risk Group. Although there were some evidence gaps identified for this pest in the PRA these are not currently considered a priority for research funding against threats posed by other pests. Surveillance for *C. fagacearum* will be undertaken during routine quarantine surveillance*.* Awareness raising activity is ongoing through the international plant sentinel network both within the UK and Europe. Botanic Gardens Conservation International has also circulated information in an edition of their journal to over 600 organisations around the world. A pest specific contingency plan is currently in the early stages of development.

I would like to thank you 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 decision. 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)

# The Woodland Trust