

Date: 22 Sept 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Response to the Pest Risk Assessment (PRA) review for *Phytophthora lateral*is.

Thank you for submitting views on the PRA and the UK Plant Health Authority (Defra, Forestry Commission and the Devolved Administrations, PHA) recommendations for the UK policy on *Phytophthora lateral*is.

Recommendation

The review recommended the following:

- Raising awareness with the trade over surveillance
- Guidance to be issued on dealing with and spotting the organism
- Statutory action only to be taken if the organism was found in trade and not in the wider environment, parks/gardens and private gardens.

Background

Although mainly associated with Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) there have been findings of *Phytophthora lateral*is on other members of the *Chamaecyparis* genus, the *Thuja* genus, two species of *Juniperus* and *Taxus brevifolia* (Pacific yew). Responsible for extensive mortality on Lawson cypress, death of Pacific yew has also been recorded and the collapse of the US Lawson cypress nursery industry has been attributed to this disease. Currently found in populations of *C. lawsoniana* in a number of managed landscapes in the UK, should the pathogen become established in the nursery trade, ornamental production of *C. lawsoniana* in the UK is also likely to be at serious risk.

Responses

Four organisations submitted comments in response to the review, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), Woodland Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and Duramen Consulting Ltd.

Of the responses received two broadly supported the recommendations and two did not specify a preference.

Concerns

Three of the responses received, whilst not disagreeing with the recommendations, raised some concerns that are set out in more detail below:

- Duramen Consulting Ltd. did not believe the commercial importance of Lawson's cypress as an ornamental species and landscaping industries in the case of on-going maintenance had been adequately considered.
- The Woodland Trust raised concerns over the potential for the organism to move to other hosts and to hybridise with other *Phytophthora* species to create a potentially more damaging organism.
- Scottish Natural Heritage raised concerns that suggested impacts could be much larger if native yew and juniper, which is already under threat from *P. austrocedri*, proved susceptible. Duramen Consulting Ltd. also highlighted the issue of native yew potentially being susceptible which would result in more significant impacts than stated in the risk assessment.

In response to the points made:

- The PRA has been updated to reflect the fact that Lawson's cypress is a commonly grown ornamental across the UK. Especially in urban areas including parks and private gardens where it is often used in hedging as a windbreak and to give privacy and security.
- The PRA acknowledges that there is potential for different *Phytophthora* species to hybridise and result in new species, whether such post-introduction evolutionary change can increase virulence" was highlighted as a key uncertainty affecting impact. Raising awareness of the organism and encouraging the trade to continue surveying the known susceptible hosts will be key in identifying any potential change in virulence.
- We recognise that environmental and social impacts resulting from the disease would be more significant if native species such as juniper and yew were affected. There is uncertainty over the host range though there is no evidence to date that native juniper and yew are affected. Encouraging the trade to continue monitoring for the pest will be important in detecting any impacts on these hosts.
- Management/planting guidance to raise industry awareness and to promote best practice is being developed by the GB *P. lateralis* management team, which includes industry stakeholders. The guidance will be similar to that produced for *P. austrocedri* which is currently under review and available to download from the Forestry Commission website at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/paustrocedrae#advice>.

On the basis of the consultation responses received, evidence about the pest and the outcome of discussions at the Plant Health Risk Group, the UK Plant Health Authority agree to take forward the recommendations proposed. While statutory action on findings in the wider environment will not be carried out routinely, the option of carrying out such action in exceptional circumstances will be retained. This may include, for example, forestry environments and other sensitive habitats are threatened or where isolated finds are detected in areas where the pathogen has not previously been detected. Similarly, a change in behaviour of the pathogen may prompt consideration of an alternative approach in some situations.

I would like to thank all 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. A further review of policy will take place in 2 years, taking account of developments following the introduction of the policy described in this letter, such as information from stakeholders on the distribution of the organism. I hope this letter demonstrates the reasoning behind our decision and that we have sought to find a solution which reflects the current position and the views expressed by different stakeholders.

If you have any views about how this consultation was handled, or its outcome, please let me know.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Nicola Spence

UK Chief Plant Health Officer

Email: nicola.spence@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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

Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)

Woodland Trust

Scottish Natural Heritage

Duramen Consulting Ltd.