

EPPO work on invasive alien species

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The European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) is an intergovernmental organization responsible for cooperation in plant protection in the European and Mediterranean region. Under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), EPPO is the regional plant protection organization (RPPO) for Europe. It was created in 1951 and has now 46 member countries including all the member states of the European Union and other future probable EU members, Russia and some other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as certain other Mediterranean countries (in North Africa and Near East). Since its creation EPPO has worked on preventing the introduction of dangerous pests from other parts of the world, and limiting their spread within Europe if they were introduced. These invasive alien species are listed in two lists of pests recommended for regulation as quarantine pests. EPPO members are encouraged to manage them nationally while supporting a harmonized regional approach.

EPPO works with the national plant protection organizations of its members, i.e. the authorities responsible for all regulatory aspects of plant protection, and particularly for plant quarantine (whether applied to import at national borders or as official control within the country). The EPPO Secretariat in Paris manages a programme of international work, which produces regional standards recommended to the members. These standards are drafted by panels of experts from the member countries, coordinated by the Working Party on Phytosanitary Regulations. Over 400 standards for phytosanitary measures have been developed so far, that include general background measures against alien pests as well as specific measures for individual pests. They form part of different sets such as pest-specific phytosanitary measures, phytosanitary procedures, certification schemes, PRA schemes, diagnostic protocols. An important EPPO standard is PM 1/2 A1 and A2 lists of pest recommended for regulation as quarantine pests. A1 pests are pest that are recognized not to be present in any part of the EPPO region and that present a risk to most or all parts of the region whereas A2 pests are pests with a limited distribution in EPPO region, but presenting a risk of further spread.

Traditionally, EPPO has given priority to pests of cultivated plants, i.e. insects, nematodes, fungi, bacteria, viruses, but has also been concerned with weeds, which harm crops by their competition.. In 2002, EPPO Council resolved that invasive alien species affecting plants are quarantine pests. Quarantine pests may include pests of agriculture, of forests and of wild flora, indirect pests of plants, and plants themselves. Wild plants are also threatened by the introduction and spread of pests, and notably by "invasive alien plants" which can seriously disturb and destroy natural plant communities.

CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

The EPPO Panel on Pest Risk Analyses is currently revising and extending the Pest risk assessment scheme and Pest risk management scheme (respectively EPPO Standards PM 5/3 and PM 5/4) to ensure that they are applicable to invasive alien plants.

EPPO Secretariat has started to publish news about invasive alien plants in the Reporting Service¹.

The *ad hoc* EPPO Panel on Invasive Alien Species was created in 2002 with the following terms of reference:

- terminology and definitions
- collection of data on invasive alien species in the EPPO region, particularly invasive alien plants
- collection of information on official control measures existing in the EPPO region for invasive alien plants
- pilot studies on pest risk assessment and pest risk management of specific invasive alien species
- pilot studies on possible recommendations to EPPO members on the suppression and containment of invasive alien plants
- development of a common approach to weeds as quarantine pests or regulated non-quarantine pests, in relation to invasive alien plants as appropriate
- EPPO information services on invasive alien species.

The Panel meets twice a year and its members come from 10 European countries: Belarus, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK. The Panel and the EPPO Secretariat cooperates with other bodies such as the Secretariat of the Bern Convention, the IPPC Secretariat, CAB International, national environmental agencies, etc.

So far, the Panel has identified and partly documented over 1000 alien plant species of concern as a result of a Europe-wide consultation. Of these, 45 have been selected for further study (including 15 aquatic weeds) because they have obvious importance for many European countries. The selected species are being fully documented, with the help of expertise from the member countries. Those presenting a particular immediate danger have been placed on the EPPO Alert List².

The Panel is developing the EPPO List of invasive alien plants. This list aims to make member countries aware of the threat to biodiversity or other economic or social impacts that are linked to some plant species. For these plants, EPPO will recommend a set of general measures to prevent their further introduction and spread (for example: publicity, restriction on sale and planting, control). The list will be available through the website and will be regularly updated.

The Panel will work further on some important individual cases and perform risk analyses in order to define specific management options against these particular species. Measures are being evaluated in two contexts: prevention of introduction from other continents and management of species already introduced. Work is concentrating on alien plants which are intentionally introduced as ornamentals, since they present great problems if they prove to be invasive.

¹ The EPPO Reporting Service is a monthly information report on events of phytosanitary concern. It focuses on new geographical records, new host plants, new pests, pests to be added to the EPPO Alert List, detection and identification methods etc.

² The Alert List is presented on EPPO website, it is constantly updated and includes mini data sheets on pests that present a new or unexpected risk to the EPPO region in order to achieve early warning.