



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
 DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
 ENVIRONMENT
 Directorate B – Natural Capital
ENV.B.2 - Biodiversity

3RD MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC FORUM ON INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

21 JUNE 2016

BRUSSELS

MINUTES

The third meeting of the Scientific Forum on Invasive Alien Species was held in Brussels on 21 June 2016. The following Member States participated in the meeting: AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, IE, IT, HR, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK and UK.

The European Commission (COM) was represented by Unit ENV.B2 and Unit JRC.H1. The meeting was chaired by the Head of Unit ENV.B.2. A full list of meeting participants is provided in Annex 1.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

COM welcomed the delegates to the meeting. The proposed agenda was adopted without comments. COM suggested one item under "any other business": presentation of a new tool for the electronic management of EU meetings organisation.

The agenda can be found in Annex 2.

2. OPINION ON RISK ASSESSMENTS (RA)

The Scientific Forum was asked to deliver its opinion on 16 risk assessments and on new information on one more species, *Cervus nippon* (Sika deer). Of the 16 RA, 5 were given a positive opinion without further comments, while the other 11 were deemed overall satisfactory but needs for revision were identified. The authors were asked to provide a revised version taking into account the comments of the members of the group.

It was agreed that for RA revised by 31 July 2016, the Scientific Forum would deliver a final opinion by 31 August 2016 in order for these to be passed on to the IAS Committee in time of its next meeting. Otherwise they would be considered in a next round.

Acer negundo

Box elder

The authors were asked to provide a revised version taking into account the following comments:

- Ensure that all previous comments have been sufficiently processed.

- Assessment of all active pathways, even if the species is widely spread.
- Ensure consistency between confidence levels in the report and the summary.
- Ensure consistency between the answers to the questions and the scores assigned.

One member indicated that a moderate impact is not sufficient for listing. Widely spread species can only be listed if they have the most significant negative impact. COM explained that the discussion on whether to include a species on the list or not will take place in the IAS Committee.

Alopochen aegyptiaca	Egyptian goose
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The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- Elaboration needed on the entry section: how widely kept is the species?
- Better substantiate the impact and re-evaluate the conclusion "high impact with high confidence" on basis of available evidence.
- Develop the impact of climate change.
- Provide more information on the benefits of the species.

Overall opinion was that even if conclusion of RA would be moderate impact or if current evidence on negative impacts is not very strong, the species does have negative impacts and one should consider taking measures without waiting for more evidence.

One member stressed that national measures in Member States where the species is not present are undermined by non-action in Member States where the species is widely spread and that one should not take the risk for allowing more ornamental alien species to establish in order to prevent future negative impacts that cannot be foreseen at the moment.

Alternanthera philoxeroides	Alligator weed
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The Scientific Forum gave a positive opinion on the RA without any further comments.

Asclepias syriaca	Common milkweed
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The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- Assign one single score: a classification as "moderate/major" impact is not acceptable, it should be either "moderate" or "major". Any uncertainty should be conveyed through the confidence level.
- More details should be provided on the impact.

- More information was requested on ecosystem services.
- The EU-level should be more elaborated, the RA was considered to be too restricted to PL.

Bison bison	American bison
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The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- Ensure that all previous comments have been sufficiently processed.
- The likelihood of establishment needs to be clarified. A member asked more information on the constraints for establishment: are they of human or ecological nature? It was agreed that only ecological constraints should be considered.
- The overall score for the probability of entry needs to be re-evaluated.
- Confidence levels considered high without supporting literature need to be re-evaluated.
- More information is needed on the social and economic benefits of the species.

Cervus nippon	Sika deer
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This RA was already approved in 2015. Additional evidence on the effectiveness of management has been submitted with the request to the Committee to reconsider the compliance of the species with the criteria for listing.

Some members indicated that the species rarely hybridises with native deer in their countries, but would welcome more information on this issue from other countries.

One member stressed that hybridisation is indeed rare. However the species does escape in the environment and if the behavioural barrier currently hindering hybridisation breaks down, then hybridisation may become quite likely. Hybrid specimens could then continue to reproduce and as such become invasive. This is already the case in Scotland

Elodea nuttallii	Nuttall's waterweed
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The Scientific Forum gave a positive opinion on the RA without any further comments.

Gunnera tinctoria

Chilean rhubarb

The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comment:

- A contradiction in the scoring between report and summary should be corrected.

Heracleum mantegazzianum

Giant hogweed

The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- There should be no questions left unanswered in the RA.
- The level of uncertainty / confidence needs to be adjusted.
- Scoring should be streamlined: only one score (either medium or major, but not medium/major) should be assigned and the uncertainty to be addressed through the confidence level.

One member indicated that the impact of the species is only moderate.

Homarus americanus

American lobster

The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- The new scientific elements in the information provided by US and Canada should be considered in the RA. It was considered that this information includes some contradictions as well and these should be also described in the RA.
- The potential area of establishment should be looked at again and perhaps reduced slightly. A member indicated that with climate change the conditions would further diverge from the requirements for the species. Other replied that the species then just moves deeper in the water. Another member stressed that even if the species does not establish, it can still have a negative impact.
- The rapidness of the spread of the species should be further evaluated.
- The information on social and economic benefits should be improved.
- Include more details on the specimens found in the environment: were their claws loose or bound together?
- Include an analysis on the impact that listing the American lobster could have on the European lobster. Would fishing of the European lobster increase to meet the demand for lobster thus putting pressure on the population?

Impatiens glandulifera

Indian balsam

The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- Complete missing references. The date of access to CABI cannot be indicated as publication date, the RA should refer to the original publication and the original publication date.
- Include more information on the ecosystem services.
- Resolve discrepancies between the comments and the scoring.
- Explain better the possible spread across the EU.

Lupinus polyphyllus

Large-leaved lupin

The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- Elaboration on whether it is adequate that the RA covers hybrids beyond the species. Is there sufficient evidence on the negative impact of those hybrids?
- Elaborate on the spread section if trade within the EU is active.
- Improvement on the section describing the potential spread of this species.

Microstegium vimineum

Japanese stiltgrass

The Scientific Forum gave a positive opinion on the RA without any further comments.

Myriophyllum heterophyllum

Broadleaf watermilfoil

The Scientific Forum gave a positive opinion on the RA without any further comments.

Nyctereutes procyonoides

Raccoon dog

The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comments:

- More underpinning is needed to support the major economic impact of the species (e.g. using information recently received from the fur industry sector).
- Correct section 2.5 where reference is made to the coypu instead of the raccoon dog.

- Better substantiate the biodiversity impact. All sources are considered valuable but the RA should clearly state when scientific evidence is used and when grey literature or expert opinion is used. The level of confidence must be appropriate: If insufficient scientific evidence is available, this can be concluded with high uncertainty. Overall the opinion was that in any case the species has more than just low impact.

A member also raised the issue on the impact the management of the species would have on the vaccinations programmes for rabies. Another member questioned that there would be an impact. There was no conclusion on this point.

Ondatra zibethicus	Muskrat
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The Scientific Forum gave a positive opinion on the RA without any further comments.

Pennisetum setaceum	Crimson fountaingrass
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The authors were asked to provide a revised version of the RA taking into account the following comment:

- The environmental impact in the RA merely relates to the outermost regions. It was requested to explicitly address the impact on continental Europe.
- It was also requested to review the presence of the species in Europe.
- Ensure that previous comments that were not completely addressed are followed up.

3. METHODOLOGY FOR RISK ASSESSMENTS

COM presented the document¹ section by section. Member States and the Commission would be invited to apply this methodology when developing new risk assessments. The methodology would also be the basis for the development of a possible delegated act on the methodology for RAs according to Article 5(3) of the IAS Regulation.

COM explained that in the working document under discussion it had reshuffled the requirements in the Regulation to set out a structure that would match the structure usually followed by RAs. Nevertheless, it was noted that it is not possible to match the structure of all RAs as they are different.

A discussion was then held on each section of the document.

On the categorisation of species that are present, established and widely spread, as described in a discussion paper (prepared by ES), it was observed that a contained population could also be self-sustaining. It was suggested replacing "present in the environment" by "observed in the environment". Seeing the differing points of views being expressed, COM concluded that the discussion paper was intended to provide a guide for the risk assessors to describe the status of a species, but if such paper created more difficulties than it solved, then its use may be reconsidered. The Scientific Forum agreed that there cannot be any threshold above which a species should be considered as

¹ <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/cadb28c1-b467-4906-a7f7-40f80ab4f276>

"widely spread" that could be of general use for all species. The evaluation whether a species is "widely spread" should be done depending on the species concerned and the particular circumstances in the Member State concerned. Any effort to devise such a threshold would be arbitrary and scientifically unfounded.

On the classification of impacts (discussion paper prepared by NL), it was suggested not to limit RAs to two classification systems. One solution would be to develop a conversion table, providing an overview of the available classification systems and "translating" the various impact classifications into one another. It was agreed that this would be very difficult to be achieved.

On the quality assurance, it was agreed that the system should include at least two reviewers, and that other systems with panels with many reviewers can also be used. It was agreed that it would not be necessary to report on how the comments from the reviewers were processed. The major issue is that the author and the reviewers should have come to an agreement, and that the reviewers sign off the RA as approved. COM shall seek to clarify this in the working document on the methodology.

Some members suggested including detailed cost assessments, while others considered this to render the exercise impossible, also as such financial data is often not available.

It was suggested to remove the word "bibliographic" before "references".

COM invited comments on whether the working document under discussion provided a possible basis for a delegated act. There were differing opinions as to whether a delegated act should be developed and become the methodology needed to submit a risk assessment, or whether it was not better to agree on the elements that need to be in the content of a risk assessment, but leaving more flexibility to use existing RA protocols.

Some members considered that adoption of a compulsory structure for RA would have significant implications and would require considerable effort to revise the established methodologies and suggested that the delegated act should specify the content but not the structure of RA. Attention was raised also to the fact that existing methodologies are constantly updated and new ones are developed.

Conclusion: the document will be shared and additional comments can be submitted by 31 July, after which COM will process all of this into a new version. This would be considered as a basis for the discussions towards a delegated act at the next meeting of the Scientific Forum, planned for October.

4. WORKING METHODS OF THE SCIENTIFIC FORUM

COM presented the working document², describing the working method to be followed by the Scientific Forum. The Scientific Forum welcomed the document and appreciated the progress made. A member informed that he had tested the review template and found it works well.

On the issue of stakeholder involvement and on what sort of feedback would be taken into consideration, COM clarified that only scientific evidence and economic data would be taken into consideration at the stage of the preparation of RAs, and thus opinions on

² <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/cadb28c1-b467-4906-a7f7-40f80ab4f276>

whether a species should be listed would not be considered. This information should be clearly stated when inviting stakeholders to provide feedback. It was also proposed not to accept comments after the set deadlines. It was clarified that stakeholders from the MS should provide their feedback to the MS authorities, EU-level and non-EU stakeholders should provide this to COM. COM should first screen stakeholder inputs for political comments and only transmit additional evidence to the MS.

The Forum suggested that having a group of members working on RAs and coordinating the comments via a rapporteur would be too burdensome.

Conclusion: COM will revise the document and then share it on its IAS-webpage.

5. AOB

COM presented a new electronic tool to organise and manage EU meetings, to be used from the next Scientific Forum meeting onwards.

Follow up:

- 6 RAs with positive opinion are ready to be discussed on the 7th Committee meeting in October.
- 11 RAs requiring a minor revision are expected to be revised **by 31 July**. Revised RAs will be shared with the Scientific Forum for written approval **by 31 August**. **Early September**, they will be shared with the Committee ready to be discussed on the 7th Committee meeting in October.
- The methodology for risk assessments is open for further comments **by 31 July**, after which COM will further reflect on the material with a view to progressing towards a draft delegated act to be discussed on the 4th meeting of the Scientific Forum in October.
- COM will revise the working method of the Scientific Forum on the RAs and upload it on its website.

All inputs can be sent by email to ENV-IAS@ec.europa.eu.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Agenda of the meeting of 21 June 2016

Annex 2: List of participants at the meeting of 21 June 2016

Annex 1 - List of participants

MS	Member State authority & Individual Representative
AT	Federal Environment Agency
BE	Belgian Biodiversity Platform - Belgian Science Policy Office
BG	Ministry of Environment and Water
CY	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
CZ	Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic
DE	Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz, BfN)
DK	The Nature Agency - Danish Ministry of Environment
EE	Estonian Ministry of the Environment
FI	Natural Resources Institute Finland
HR	State Institute for Nature Protection
IE	The National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Art, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
IT	ISPRA Institute for Environmental Protection and Research
LU	Ministère du Développement durable et des Infrastructures - Administration de la nature et des forêts
LV	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia
MT	Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)
NL	The State of the Netherlands, Ministerie van Economische Zaken - Directie Natuur en Biodiversiteit
PL	Ministry of the Environment
SE	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management
SI	Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave / Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation
SK	State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic
UK	APHA - GB Non-Native Species Secretariat

List of participants – European Commission

- DG Environment, Unit B.2
- JRC, Unit H.1

Annex 2 - Agenda

Point	Timing	Description	Documents	Action
1	9:00	Opening and Welcome Adoption of the agenda	Draft agenda	Adoption
2		Assessment of RA for species under consideration for inclusion on the Union list	Risk assessments ³	Delivery of opinion on RA
3		Risk assessment methodology	Working document ⁴	Discussion
4		Working methods of the Scientific Forum	Working document ⁵	Discussion
5		AOB		
	18:30 pm	End of the day		

³ <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/5ffbcde1-6243-4e33-9d0b-6a9961eed44c>

^{4,5} <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/cadb28c1-b467-4906-a7f7-40f80ab4f276>