

The UK *Phytophthora* Programme

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Aims

- The current policy is one of containment and, where possible, eradication of both *Phytophthora ramorum* and *P. kernoviae* in England, Wales and Scotland.
- This has primarily been on a precautionary basis to reduce potential threats to trees whilst additional information on the level of risk and impact is collected.

Governance

- Oversight by an inter-departmental Programme Board including representatives from Defra (policy, science, legal and inspection services), Forestry Commission (policy, science) and Scottish Government (policy).
- Separate sub-groups:
Science, Field Implementation, South Wales, Cornwall, Industry Liaison, Press & Publicity

Key Methods

- Restrictions on the import of host material from non-EU countries with infections.
- Increased level of monitoring of EU material (plant passporting of main host species and enhanced inspection levels on nurseries).
- Eradication action against nursery outbreaks.
- Structured surveys of historic gardens and at risk woodlands, particularly in southwest England.
- More recent focus on *Vaccinium*.
- Some eradication action on non-nursery outbreak sites, prioritised in line with a risk matrix.
- Publicity and guidance for stakeholders.

Science

- All this activity has been supported by an extensive programme of research and development.
- Has led to revised Pest Risk Analyses for both organisms in order to better inform risk management decisions.
- *P. ramorum* outbreaks seem to be more intractable because of the longevity of the chlamydospores.
- *P. kernoviae* outbreaks seem to be easier to eradicate but it may spread more rapidly possibly in the air.

Results & Reality

- A steady reduction in outbreaks of *P. ramorum* on nurseries.
- We found a new organism – *P. kernoviae*.
- There is a serious and increasing level of both organisms in historic gardens and woodlands in Cornwall with *kernoviae* seeming to be more damaging than *ramorum*.
- We now have outbreaks of *kernoviae* on *Vaccinium* heathland.
- Infected historic gardens are now losing significant numbers of premium Rhododendron plants causing questions about their future viability.
- Eradication of the organisms unlikely but can be reduced to levels of low epidemiological significance through removal of host Rhododendrons.
- Small numbers of trees, especially Beech, are now becoming infected, mainly by *kernoviae* and are dying.
- The current eradication efforts in Cornwall are failing to keep up with the spread of the diseases.

Where Next?

- In the latter stages of conducting a comprehensive policy review involving scrutiny of both the scientific evidence base and economic case.
- Two (possibly three) policy options:
 - Meet EU minimum legal requirements (whatever they are).
 - Launch a substantially enhanced containment and eradication programme for one or both organisms.
 - Possibly an option based around continuing current level of activity pending a clearer understanding of exact level of risk to trees.

Future Schedule

- Once the evidence base has been reviewed and comments of peer reviewers addressed then submission to Ministers (May 2008) asking for approval to launch public consultation on options.
- Three month public consultation. Responses analysed and presented to Ministers for final decision on way forward (September/October 2008).
- New policy starts in 2009.

Conclusions

- Have learnt a lot about their biology, management and impact - but have we learnt enough?
- Have been tackling the problem of these diseases since 2002 – taking a precautionary approach.
- Facing a hard choice between effectively withdrawing from widescale action and launching a costly programme of action to reduce inoculum in at-risk areas to epidemiologically insignificant levels.