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To: UK Stakeholders

Your ref:
Our ref:
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Dear Sir/Madam

PLANT HEALTH RISK REGISTER

I am pleased to let you know that the Plant Health Risk Register was launched at a Ministerial Plant Health Summit yesterday and is now publicly available.

The Plant Health Risk Register represents a major step in implementing the recommendations of the independent Task Force on Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity.

It is a tool for government, industry and stakeholders to prioritise action against pests and diseases which threaten our crops, trees, gardens and countryside.

Devolved Administrations, Forestry Commission, stakeholder organisations and experts from the Task Force were closely involved in developing the format of the Risk Register and have had the opportunity to comment on a draft. The version launched yesterday includes additional pests that were suggested when the initial draft was circulated. We will continue to update the Risk Register through the monthly cycle of the UK Plant Health Risk Group described below.

Other countries around the world are following the development with interest and are showing interest in adopting similar methodology.

668 organisms have so far been rated for the likelihood and impact of them becoming established in the UK, or for spreading further within the UK, focusing initially on regulated pests, those where actions have been recommended by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation and others where UK action has been considered (e.g. following the production of a Pest Risk Analysis).

The Risk Register is not intended to produce a simple list of the “top ten pests”, but to establish different priorities for regulation, research, contingency planning, publicity, surveys and detailed risk assessment, depending on the characteristics of the organism. We will continue to consult where detailed Pest Risk Analyses are produced.

Some risks are already being effectively mitigated. For others there are few cost effective mitigations available. Some slight risks can be reduced still further at little cost. The Risk Register is a tool to support the decision making process, but there are many other factors to be taken into account, particularly the cost effectiveness of any proposed measures.

This is the first phase of the Risk Register, put together in little over 6 months. We will continue to refine it, add more organisms, and review ratings as new evidence arises.

On a monthly basis the Plant Health Risk Group will update entries in the Risk Register in the light of new intelligence from around the world and developments in the UK. All UK Plant Health Authorities and stakeholders will continue to have the opportunity to make proposals for entries on



the Risk Register and to comment on its outputs. In making suggestions for entries we would look for as much help as possible in justifying why an issue should be assessed and in providing background information. The intention is to include those plant health threats where there is some prospect of a co-ordinated response being considered (by Government and/or stakeholders). We would not expect to assess, for example, endemic pests being managed by individual growers or where no action is being taken.

A project on methodology for phase 2 is considering further how crops, trees and other plants are valued for their contribution to our economy, our society and our environment. The phase 2 project will also look at how impacts are measured, how we take into account the cost and effectiveness of measures to reduce risk, and how we address the variation in risks over time, and between different parts of the UK. We look forward to continuing to work with you as phase 2 progresses during 2014.

I am pleased to say that the Risk Register and a guidance document can be accessed through a web-based interface, on the Plant Health section of the Fera website, at <http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/pestsDiseases/index.cfm>

I trust you will find the Risk Register of interest and value.

Yours faithfully



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