

Advice 01-2017 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on the evaluation of a draft royal decree on the control of the creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.)

Background & Terms of reference

The Scientific Committee has been requested to assess a draft royal decree on the control of creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.).

Methodology

This advice is based on expert opinion and on different scientific references.

Document assessment

The Scientific Committee formulates various comments regarding the limitation of the compulsory control of "noxious thistles" to only the creeping thistle and regarding the definition of the buffer zone around an arable plot.

Conclusion

The creeping thistle is a highly competitive perennial species capable of rapidly propagating vegetatively and of dispersing its seeds over long distances. The other three biennial species of "noxious thistles" can form relatively large rosettes, making them competitive species. Moreover, they are also capable of dispersing over long distances and are abundant locally in certain regions depending on the environment. In addition, some recent developments in agriculture, such as the lower availability of herbicides and the more integrated management of agricultural plots, are likely to favor the proliferation of these species. Consequently, these species constitute undesirable plants which should be controlled as soon as possible after their detection.

In view of the above elements, the Scientific Committee is in favor of maintaining the current legislation, namely the compulsory control of the four species of "noxious thistles" referred to in Article 43 of the Royal Decree of 19 November 1987 on the whole territory (i.e. without definition of a buffer zone), except in natural areas of scientific interest and in nature reserves as regards the marsh thistle.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french.