

Advice 19-2019 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on a draft royal decree modifying the royal decree of 19/11/1987 on the control of organisms harmful to plants and plant products.

Question

The Scientific Committee has been asked to assess a draft royal decree modifying the royal decree of 19/11/1987 on the control of organisms harmful to plants and plant products. This draft aims to repeal the obligation to control a range of harmful organisms.

Background

The new European phytosanitary legislation (cf. Regulation (EU) 2016/2031) only targets several harmful organisms, either those with the 'quarantine pest' status or those with the 'European Union regulated non-quarantine pest' status. The conditions for these two statutes are described in the European legislation. The control of quarantine pests is compulsory, with the aim of eradicating them. The control of European Union non-quarantine pests is only compulsory, under certain conditions, for operators who market plants for planting.

Method

The advice is based on expert opinion and on several scientific references.

Advice

The Scientific Committee notes that, based on the definition of a quarantine pest, a harmful organism could no longer be considered as a quarantine pest at the European level but indeed as a quarantine pest at the Belgian level, if it is widespread in other territories of the European Union but absent from Belgian territory.

In addition, the Scientific Committee stresses in particular that the control of certain harmful organisms mentioned in the draft royal decree remains compulsory in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/2031, i.e. the control of "quarantine pests" and of "European Union regulated non-quarantine pests". With regard to harmful organisms that will no longer be subject to control, the Scientific Committee stresses that the Colorado potato beetle, the harmful thistles and the European spruce bark beetle are widespread in Belgium. These harmful organisms no longer meet the definition of a quarantine pest and their eradication from the Belgian territory is now considered unfeasible as they are widespread. In practice however, it is important to continue to manage their populations as they can cause considerable economic damage.

Uncertainties

The uncertainties in this advice are those inherent to an expert opinion.

Conclusions

The Scientific Committee acknowledges that the draft royal decree, referred to in this opinion and which contains amendments to the royal decree of 19 November 1987, makes it possible to align the Belgian phytosanitary legislation with the new European phytosanitary legislation and constitutes a necessary response to the evolution of the populations of the concerned harmful organisms in Belgium.

Given that the scope of the new European phytosanitary legislation is less extensive than that of the current Belgian phytosanitary legislation, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion, however, that the repeal, at the level of the federal authorities, of the compulsory control of the Colorado potato beetle, of the harmful thistles and of the European spruce bark beetle could lead to an increase in their populations and could cause considerable economic damage. Therefore, structured management measures for these harmful organisms have preferably to be established by another body.

The full text is available on this website in Dutch and in French.

