

Advice 12-2020 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on a draft royal decree on protective measures against quarantine organisms harmful to plants products, and amending different stipulations concerning harmful organisms

Question

The Scientific Committee has been asked to assess a draft royal decree on protective measures against quarantine organisms harmful to plants and plant products, and amending different stipulations concerning harmful organisms.

Method

The advice is based on expert opinion.

Advice

The requirements for non-certified potato tubers intended for planting (= farm seed tubers) are identical to those laid down in the royal decree of August 10, 2005. With regard to the production of potato seed tubers from these “farm seed tubers”, the Scientific Committee recalls that this practice is associated with a significantly increased risk of accumulation of harmful organisms over time. Therefore, contrary to the provisions of this draft royal decree, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that this type of production should be subject to official control. With regard to the production of potatoes for consumption from these “farm seed tubers”, the Scientific Committee also considers that additional requirements should be added in order to further reduce the risk of possible spread of harmful organisms via these “farm seed tubers”.

With regard to *Erwinia amylovora*, the causative agent of fire blight, the Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the limitation of the compulsory control to buffer zones only, combined with the abolition of the compulsory winter pruning of hawthorns by federal authorities, will have a significant negative economic impact on the Belgian fruit sector (apple and pear producers). Indeed, the consequences could be both direct (reduced yield) and indirect (possible closure of export markets as it cannot be guaranteed that exported fruits do not present any phytosanitary risk if there is no compulsory control at national level). The Scientific Committee therefore recommends that these management measures should be adopted by a competent authority (region).

Uncertainties

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

Conclusions

The Scientific Committee recognizes that the draft royal decree aimed at repealing and replacing the royal decree of August 10, 2005 makes it possible to align the Belgian phytosanitary legislation with the new European phytosanitary legislation.

However, in order to further reduce the risk of possible spread of harmful organisms through growing potato “farm seed tubers”, the Scientific Committee considers that additional requirements should be added to this draft royal decree.

With regard to *E. amylovora*, the causative agent of fire blight, the Scientific Committee recommends that additional management measures should be adopted by a competent authority (region).

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