

Submission by the European Community in response to Notification 2006-116

Views and Experiences for the In-depth Review of Work on Invasive Alien Species

This submission updates and complements previous information submitted by the European Community (EC) as contained in the Thematic Report on Alien Invasive Species provided in October 2002 and the EC's Third National Report submitted in December 2005.

Policy and legal framework

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) represent a serious threat to biodiversity which needs to be addressed if the EU is to attain its goal "to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010"¹. The 6th Environmental Action Programme² and the recent Communication from the Commission on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 and Beyond³ highlights action on IAS as a priority objective. The Action Plan⁴, associated to the Communication, includes the following actions on IAS:

1. "Assess, at EU level, gaps in the current legal, policy and economic framework to prevent, control and eradicate IAS and mitigate their impacts on biodiversity and develop a community strategy to address IAS including, where necessary and appropriate, measures to fill gaps [by 2007].
2. Encourage Member States to develop national strategies on invasive alien species [by 2007] and to implement them fully [by 2010].
3. Encourage ratification and implementation by Member States of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ship's Ballast Water and Sediments under the International Maritime Organisation [2006 onwards].
4. Establish early warning system for the prompt exchange of information between neighbouring countries on the emergence of IAS and cooperation on control measures across national boundaries [by 2008]."

The Council of Ministers supported the above mentioned Communication and in its conclusions concerning IAS "calls upon the Commission to assess gaps in the current legal, policy and economic framework for the prevention of introduction and for the control and eradication of invasive alien species; invites the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to prepare an EU strategy and an effective early warning system, taking into account biogeographical regions, on the basis of the CBD Guiding Principles on Invasive Alien Species, taking into account the Bern Convention European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species and recognizing the efforts made by relevant Conventions and Organisations such as the IPPC and the EPPO"⁵.

¹ Presidency Conclusions, Goteborg European Council, 15-16 June 2001

² Decision no 1600/2002/EC

³ COM(2006)216

⁴ SEC(2006) 621

⁵ Council conclusions on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity (COM(2006)216), 18 December 2006

The European Parliament urged the development of a comprehensive Community response to the problem of IAS, including an early warning system, and filling gaps in the legislative framework, including the development of an EU Strategy on IAS⁶.

The Committee of the Regions⁷ and the Economic and Social Committee⁸ also supported the Communication and its priorities.

At the EU level a legal framework to control/manage IAS exists for limited categories of potential IAS and pathways:

- robust and well established systems exist to regulate trade with animal diseases, plant pests and GMOs;
- 4 invasive animal species are currently listed under the Wildlife Trade Regulations and cannot be introduced into EU territory (the red eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), the American bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*), the painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*) and the American ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*);
- EC nature protection legislation, the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC), contains provisions on regulation of non-native species introduction, which could harm protected species and habitats;
- for aquaculture organisms, the new "Regulation for use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture"⁹ will establish a new system for assessment and management of the risks associated with the introduction of new organisms for aquaculture.

Research

The EU is funding research projects on IAS:

- under the 5th Framework Programme: project "Giant Hogweed" (2002-2005) focused on developing a sustainable strategy for alien invasive plant management in Europe.
- under the 6th Framework Programme:
 - project DASIE (Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe). DASIE should deliver an European one-stop-shop for information on biological invasions in Europe. It should bring together: The European Alien Species Expertise Registry, European Alien Species Database (including all known established alien species in Europe), European Invasive Alien Species Accounts (description of all established alien species known to be invasive in Europe), Species Distribution Maps and Spatial Analysis (Distribution maps of all invasive alien species in Europe known or suspected of having environmental or economic impacts). End of project: February 2008. Contact: <http://www.daisie.ceh.ac.uk/>.

⁶ Report on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (Rapporteur: Adamos Adamou), European Parliament, 28.3.2007

⁷ Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 6 December 2006 on the Communication from the Commission: Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond (COM(2006) 216 final), CdR 159/2006 fin

⁸ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 15 February 2007 on the Communication from the Commission on Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 - and beyond (COM(2006) 216 final), NAT/334 - CESE 205/2007 fin DE/Ho/hn

⁹ (COM(2006)154)

- project ALARM (Assessing LARge-scale Risks for biodiversity with tested Methods). The main objectives of this project are to develop an integrated large scale risk assessment to biodiversity in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, focusing on risks consequent on climate change, environmental chemicals, loss of pollinators and biological invasions. Contact: <http://www.alarmproject.net/alarm/>.

Projects

- The European Commission (EC) financed a study "Scope options for EU action on invasive alien species"¹⁰ in 2006, which identified gaps in the current legislative and policy framework and provided recommendations for action at the EU level. One of the main results of this study was the recognition that most areas for action are issues of shared competence between the European Community and Member States. In the study it was among others recommended to develop an EU strategy on IAS.
- More than 100 projects on IAS have been funded under the EU programme LIFE during 1992-2002. Financing of IAS projects will be available under LIFE+ programme in 2007-2013 where IAS are identified as an important target.
- Project SEBI 2010 (Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators) is developing a set of biodiversity indicators, including indicators on IAS (cumulative number of alien species established in Europe, list of worst IAS, indicator on costs of IAS).

Way forward

The European Commission intends to develop an EU strategy on IAS in accordance with policy recommendations set out in the above mentioned Communication and adopted by the Council and the European Parliament.

The EU strategy will be developed in two steps: In 2008 (November) the Commission will present a Communication on policy options to tackle IAS. This Communication should identify preferred policy options for IAS policy. After obtaining political feedback from the Council and Parliament, an EU policy framework would be developed which should specify policy options to address IAS issue; such framework may or may not be accompanied by legislative proposal.

To support development of the Communication on policy options, the Commission started a consultation process on IAS policy with stakeholders (i.e., Member States, NGOs, business) and plans to launch a public consultation (spring 2008).

Recently the European Environmental Agency in cooperation with EC and experts started to look at options for development of an European Information and Early Warning System on IAS.

More information can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/index_en.htm

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/docs/2006_06_ias_scope_options.pdf, plus Annexes