

Terms of Reference for the Technical Review of the Phytophthora Programme

Expert Group members to review and evaluate the degree to which the Phytophthora Programme has met its objective to “reduce pathogen inoculum to epidemiologically insignificant levels by removing sporulating host plants from high risk areas” and thereby to “reduce the risk of significant tree death and significant impact on heathlands within England and Wales”. They should consider the science and modelling work which has informed the programme, issues of implementation and knowledge transfer to forest managers and other key stakeholders.

The Expert Group will report the results of the review to the UK Plant Health Strategy Board through its chair, Julie Hitchcock of Defra.

The review will be used to inform future control strategies and for decisions on further management and funding. The output will consist of a short report, with recommendations, based on the Expert Groups’ consensus. Where consensus can not be reached this report should indicate the range of views expressed.

The review should include consideration of:

- surveillance approaches and methodology,
- decision-making on site clearance,
- biological safety of clearance and disposal methods

The review should consider recommendations on:

- Future policy on management of the two harmful organisms
- Arrangements for continuing stakeholder engagement & knowledge transfer
- Priorities for any continuing programme of centrally-funded work
- Options for optimal management of the risks with no central funding (opportunities for increased responsibility and cost sharing with industry)
- Any key unaddressed science and evidence needs supporting disease management
- Any lessons for management of other plant disease risks

Out of scope:

- Pest risk assessment including evaluation of economic impact
- Programme management and organisation

Assumptions

- Continuing support for EU-level regulation of the pathogens
- Future resource availability will be at not more than 50% of the current £4m per annum

Timing and operation

The review will get underway once participants have accepted. The expert working group can decide its own modus operandi and timetable, with the following milestones to be included.

- 13th September 2012 – the review will be announced at the event to celebrate the first anniversary of the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Action Plan
- 31st October – progress on review to be reported to Defra, Fera and FC
- 31st December 2012 – all work complete; drafting to commence
- 28th February 2013 – the report should be submitted to Julie Hitchcock of Defra, chair of the UK Plant Health Strategy Board.

The Group will work with programme participants, through interviews or meetings and visits to sites and facilities as appropriate. Relevant documentation and reports will be made available by Fera and Forestry Commission. The Group will interact with the Industry Liaison Group for the Phytophthora Programme.

Whilst a summary of the final report is likely to be published, members of the group will be expected to work in a confidential manner, not commenting on progress or on issues raised, other than in general terms, to those outside the group, Fera and Forestry Commission, as appropriate.