



**National
Trust**

Working Towards A New Plant Health Law

To Robert Baayen .

European Commission DG SANCO E7 - Plant Health

From Ian Wright,
National Trust. Plant Health Specialist.

Date 28/02/11

Feedback on Plant Health Working Group (specific questions) 18/02/11.

Dear Robert .

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the recent EC working group on plant health however we have now considered the specific questions raised in the working document dated 20/01/11 presented to stakeholders on 18th February 2011 for inclusion in the forthcoming revision of the Common Plant Health Regime (CPHR).

As a key UK stakeholder we look forward to our continuing involvement as the recommendations develop, which we hope will result in a fully modernised plant health regime that is both flexible and dynamic throughout its expected 15 year lifespan. Please contact me if I can clarify or expand on any of the points we have raised.

Modalities for EU co-financing of losses

- 1. What sectors should be included in the scope of the coverage of EU co-financing (e.g. agriculture, horticulture, forestry)?**
- 2. What balance should be struck concerning the emphasis of future EU co-financing in relation to public and private interests?**
- 3. What legal form is preferred for the coverage of economic losses?**
- 4. What form of cost-responsibility sharing is preferred and what should be the role of the stakeholders?**

As well as the 3 key industry sectors mentioned in question 1 above. We would include wood packaging products (pallets etc), mineral importers (porous igneous rock etc) also are you including the landscape industry within the term horticulture? We would also add any other sectors that could potentially provide a pathway for plant pests and diseases.

We feel co-financing can only work when applied in a sensible and efficient way and there are clear protocols (with industry wide agreement) appropriately audited, to ensure that all possible best practice is being followed. At this point a support mechanism might then be applicable. However we are still unclear about how this might assist/support third party environmental organisations and others in similar positions whom may end up self financing

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 2NA
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the clean up that results from poor working practice in the trade or even unintentional escapes from businesses following good practice.

We call for more evaluation and a better understanding on the potential clean up costs in the natural environment post outbreak of a harmful organism, also a better understanding of the potential financial impacts to recreation and tourism resulting from poor plant health. There should be a mechanism for recovering costs if poor bio security was found to be the cause of the negative impact on the historic or natural environment.

It seems sensible to use existing schemes such as the 'Mutual Fund' accredited by the Member State in accordance with its national law whereby compensation payments can be made to those affected by economic losses caused by the outbreak of a plant disease (as in Art. 71). It does not seem fair that at present only agriculture attracts such a mechanism.

Inspections at origin could be co-financed by importers of high risk or who are developing new trade, understanding that these costs may well be passed on to the customer/consumer. If implemented this should be part of a well planned communications strategy in order to help the industry, trade and the general public understand the reasons behind any future additional costs.

In certain situations when stakeholders have met higher bio security and best practice protocols (to be developed) they could then become agents, with the aim of developing a network of industry (stakeholder) self auditing working to a suite of good practice forming the core criteria within a framework of legislation and law. The objective of self policing is to create an industry wide positive change, but we do recognise the risk of negative practices being hidden or not reported, so its essential government agencies would continue to verify and rigorously audit the system at all stages.

Revision of the plant passport system

6. To what extent should the plant passport (or logo) carry traceability information?

7. How would the private sector prefer to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the plant passport system to provide phytosanitary guarantees in intra-EU trade?

We would expect to be able to challenge the passport system as customers/consumers so to establish the history of our purchase or proposed purchase from actual source to sales outlet only that way would the term 'transparency' become thoroughly meaningful. We believe that the Plant Passport (PP) system is not widely understood outside of the industry and that if we are to make significant improvements in self protection and responsibility sharing, then changes to the PP system should be in combination with a campaign to raise public awareness of plant health issues and the role they play as customers.

We should be prepared to heavily penalise breaches of any, and enhanced, new PP scheme, such as lack of labelling to protect trade or re labelling stock to mask country of origin. It must be fully recognised that serious bio security breaches in other countries or states will put others at enhanced risk. So open reporting of any breaches must be part of the scheme. The PP system should allow full traceability of infestations/outbreaks so investigation of breaches can be conducted so as to prevent similar situations occurring.

We strongly support the introduction of a single fully harmonised labelling system that is applicable to all plants and plant products covered by current PP requirements. There should be flexibility in the harmonised system so that any new pathways/products could be included as needed in the future.

Larger plants for planting or other very high risk trade may attract enhanced passporting procedures due to the higher risk they pose.

In addition to PP we would like to see a review and clarification of the current regulations and controls surrounding plant and plant material allowance in personal baggage at ports within the EU. This is applicable for intra-EU travel or on entering the EU. This area is not clearly understood by travelling members of the general public and forms a key part of the wide lack of awareness of plant health issues and the negative consequences on the natural environment and food security.

Revision of the import of high- risk trade.

9.To what extent would you support such provisions in the new EU plant health law?

10 How could the proposed approach for high-risk trade be improved from your perspective?

As the quantity of global trade continues to increase and diversify then preventing the entry of Harmful Organisms (HO) becomes more difficult, but also more essential. Alongside established routes it is essential we direct sufficient resources towards new trade routes and or plants/food to establish enhanced detection when dealing with HOs monitoring new pathways to prevent entry.

Inspection at source becomes even more important alongside post entry inspections. We would fully support the introduction of post- entry quarantine for known high risk latent harmful organisms which cannot be detected visibly or within the timeframe of normal import procedures.

The difficult issue of symptomless (Asymptomatic) material is a serious problem, we accept some HOs will inevitably escape detection. We understand current protocols only cover named organisms, if correct then this is flawed and must be revisited as part of the development of the new regime.

Preventing the HO from escaping its origin is a more proactive approach. Some of these new organisms will have evolved with their natural hosts and so could express relatively few symptoms on certain species.

In the case of certain species of outdoor plants for planting where there is an example and known risk for HOs to spread into the natural environment then this should be classed in higher risk category.

As mentioned before under the section on co-financing inspections at origin this could be co-financed by importers of high risk trade. The flexibility of the new regime is essential and the ability to assess impacts and risks on a case by case basis

Key Contact: Ian Wright, Plant Health Specialist.

Ian Wright
Plant Health Specialist
National Trust, South West Region.
Lanhydrock, Bodmin,
Cornwall.
UK
PL30 4DE

Tel: 07884 425899

Email: ian.wright@nationaltrust.org.uk

Web: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/>

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