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## Development of a CFIA Policy and Pilot Project to Address Risks Associated with Invasive Plants

Consultation Closed (2010-09-17)

### The Issue

In 2004, the Government of Canada produced An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada that indicates a need for Canada to address the risks associated with invasive plants. Invasive plants, often referred to as weeds, can negatively impact Canada's domestic crop production, foreign market access, human health, land use and value, biodiversity and recreational opportunities. They also affect other plants by competing for resources, direct parasitism and hybridization. It is estimated that invasive plants cost the Canadian agricultural community approximately \$2.2 billion each year.

Plants with a potential to become invasive may be intentionally introduced into Canada as landscape plants, ornamentals, agricultural crops and plants for bioenergy, medicinal and research purposes. Invasive plants may be introduced unintentionally with plant products (contaminants in seed, grain, forage, produce, wood products), livestock and other animals, soil, freight, packing materials, vehicles, machinery, and recreational equipment.

Studies have shown that the most efficient and cost effective means of addressing the risks associated with invasive plants is prevention. Once an invasive species enters and establishes in a new area, the impacts, including costs of eradication and control, increase exponentially.

### Preventative Measures

The CFIA is responsible for regulating the importation, sale and use of plants and plant products under the authority of the *Plant Protection Act*, *Seeds Act* and *Weed Seeds Order*, *Feeds Act*, and associated regulations. The CFIA has a mandate to protect Canada's plant resource base, including the forestry and agriculture industry sectors and the environment. The *Weed Seeds Order* is the primary regulatory tool for the prevention of introductions of weed seeds into Canada in seed shipments. The *Plant Protection Act* and *Plant Protection Regulations* provide broad regulatory control over the import and export of plants and plant parts and have provisions for the control and eradication of pests.

The CFIA uses pest risk analysis as the scientific basis for regulatory decision-making under the *Plant Protection Act*. Pest risk analysis involves the initial identification of a pest or pathway and the preparation of pest risk assessments and pest risk management documents. The risk assessment process considers a wide variety of factors such as the probability of introduction (entry and establishment) and spread of the plant, and the potential economic, environmental and social consequences of introduction and spread. Pest risk management is the process of identifying and evaluating potential mitigation measures which may be applied to reduce the risk to acceptable levels and selecting appropriate measures.

Pests that pose a significant risk to Canada's plant resources are recommended for designation as quarantine pests and placement on the list of [Pests Regulated by Canada](#). In order to be regulated as a quarantine pest, an invasive plant has to be either not present in Canada or, if present, be of limited distribution and subject to official control activities to eradicate or limit the spread of the plant by or under the supervision of the [CFIA](#).

The invasive plant policy does not impact on the commercial proliferation of species that are already present and widely distributed or species that are not invasive. New crops, while having socio-economic benefits for Canada, may present unique risks regarding the need for adequate segregation from food and feed when these crops produce plant compounds that are toxic, allergenic, or anti-nutritional to humans and animals.

Prevention of the risks associated with invasive plants can be achieved by regulating invasive plants under the *Plant Protection Act* as quarantine pests and by placing them on the list of [Pests Regulated by Canada](#).

Preventative regulatory measures could include:

- Prohibition of import of plants that pose an unacceptable level of risk to Canada's economy or environment;
- Quarantine of commodities suspected of being infested with a pest (*Plant Protection Regulations* (PPR), s. 11);
- Requiring appropriate treatment to remove the pest from the infested items (PPR, s. 17);
- Requiring that items suspected of being infested with the pest are disposed of by the party in possession of the items (PPR, s. 27);
- Prohibiting or restricting items coming from an infested area (PPR, s. 22);
- Prohibiting or restricting the use of a place (PPR, s. 20) and activities (PPR, s. 21).

The [CFIA's](#) import documentation and procedures for invasive plants could include:

- Requiring a Permit to Import and/or Phytosanitary Certificate for some imports that currently do not need one;
- Requiring importers to identify the plants they are importing by scientific name to the species level, from all origins;
- Limiting the number of plants listed on a single Permit to Import application or other import documentation;
- Increased oversight of imported commodities to address both intentional and unintentional imports of regulated plants (e.g., inspection upon import, review of paperwork, sampling, testing, weed seed analysis);
- Increased surveillance to detect incursions of regulated plants.

Similar preventative measures are used internationally in some countries such as the United States, Mexico, China, Japan, India and Australia, as well as the European Union. These countries require pest risk analyses before authorization for new imports is given and have begun to prohibit the importation of potentially harmful invasive plants into their jurisdictions. It will be important to prevent the introduction of invasive plant species into Canada in order to preserve future market access for Canadian agricultural exports.

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