ALIEN ALERT: AN INTEGRATED SCREENING TOOL FOR EMERGING PESTS AND INVASIVE SPECIES



WHAT?

Alien Alert is a BELSPO-funded project developing an integrated quickscreening tool for emerging pests and invasive species in Belgium.

WHY?

As invasive alien species become increasingly abundant, more efficient tools are needed to inform the design of preventive actions.

HOW?

Procedures from the fields of human, animal, plant and environmental health are reviewed and compiled into an integrated protocol, following the most recent insights from invasion biology.

WHO?

Eight Belgian scientific institutions from different fields. The Belgian Biodiversity Platform coordinates the project.

WHEN?

The project runs from November 2012 until December 2013.

Plants and animals are increasingly moved outside their natural range because of human activities. Some of these species establish themselves in the wild, but spread so rapidly, that their presence becomes problematic. Although this is the case only for a minority of species, their impacts can be disproportionately high. Such species are termed **invasive alien species**.

Invasive aliens can exert a **multitude of impacts**. They can have negative effects on the health of humans, cultivated plants or animals, or the natural environment. To design adequate **measures for prevention**, policy-makers and managers need to be properly informed on the relative risks of emerging pests and invasive species.



RISK ANALYSIS

The *Alien Alert* project aims to develop an **integrated screening tool** to quickly assess the establishment capacity and impacts that emerging species may have in sectors of human, animal, plant, and environmental health.

The resulting protocol will be **standardized**, conform to the most current framework of pest risk analyses, and be applicable to any kind of organism.

The protocol should inform **policy-makers and managers** better on what species to prioritize in their actions; from the fields of public health, agriculture, horticulture, forestry and nature conservation (among others).



RISK MAPPING

To assess the likelihood for alien species to become established, the project also performs **risk mapping** for Belgium and its surroundings. By taking into account the variables that limit the range of species, the most impact-prone regions can be identified.





The potential range of ragweed in Western Europe, as constructed by niche modelling. Suitability ranges from low (blue) to high (red). (Source: Avia-GIS.)

MORE INFORMATION

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