

DEVELOPING PEST RISK ANALYSIS FOR POTENTIAL QUARANTINE PESTS IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

Trade in general and import of agricultural produce in particular carry risks of introducing harmful organisms into any country, including Slovenia. Pest risk analysis (PRA) is about how great that risk is and whether that risk is acceptable.

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has formulated a general standard on PRA and the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) has turned this into a more technical standard for use by plant protectionists.

Also the World Trade Organization and the European Commission require that Slovenia comply with an objective system of pest risk analysis for non-listed, potentially harmful organisms.

Through the EU-supported Twinning Project between the Plant Protection Services of Slovenia and the Netherlands, the officially approved diagnostic laboratories and the executing bodies of the Ministry are made familiar with the EPPO system of Pest Risk Analysis. Eventually this familiarity with PRA will have to be extended to all institutions planning to or already working with potentially harmful plant pests.

An overview will be given on the progress of the activities in Slovenia.

1. GENERAL

Import of agricultural produce and risk go hand in hand. Only a country that does not import agricultural products does not run the risk of importing organisms harmful to plants, crops, public green and forests. However, such a country does not exist. Trade is everywhere and that is generally accepted as good. Risk associated with this trade is the entry and establishment of dangerous organisms. Dangerous organisms may be bacteria, insects, fungi, nematodes and viruses, associated with planting material, fruits, seed, ornamentals, all in their specific relations. Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) is about how big that risk is and whether this risk is acceptable.

In our phytosanitary field the harmful organisms are categorized as listed quarantine organisms, regulated non-quarantine organisms, organisms of the Alert list, new or unknown non-listed organisms, and ordinary quality pests.

A pest risk analysis is only needed for the category of new or unknown non-listed organisms. For all other categories their possible harmfulness has already been established; that is why they are listed as quarantine organisms or quality pests.

For the new or unknown non-listed organisms it is important to know what the chances are to import them, how dangerous or harmful they may become if imported, and what can be done after import. Hence, a pest risk analysis.

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That PRA is not just something for scientists or staff of plant protection services is shown by the World Trade Organization, that requires objective criteria when it comes to allowing or not allowing a particular trade. Hence the increasing need for quantitative criteria. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has, through the system of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, developed a Standard for Pest Risk Analysis already in 1995. A new version of this is on its way. Important in particular for countries with a considerable trade in agricultural produce is to consider two types of PRA. One general and all-encompassing one to generate information and to consider adding a given organism to the official Quarantine list; a full dossier as it were. Another, smaller PRA for quick action after an interception on an import consignment. A possibly harmful organism has arrived and what to do with the consignment? Return to sender? Apply a pesticide, limit the distribution or not take any action at all?

The stages and sub-stages of the FAO Standard on PRA are the Initiation (which pest to analyze?), the Pest Risk Assessment (the establishment potential plus the economic impact) and the Pest Risk Management (which phytosanitary measures?). The FAO Standard is rather general and the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) has endeavored to develop a practical PRA with qualitative and quantitative questions and a scoring system. Although recognized as far from perfect it was published by EPPO to enable interested persons and plant protection services to obtain experience with it, after which it could be further improved.

2. INTRODUCTION IN SLOVENIA

The EU Twinning Covenant between the Netherlands Plant Protection Service and the Plant Protection Services in Slovenia requires the introduction of an internationally accepted system of PRA in Slovenia. It is only natural that introduction of a PRA system in Slovenia (or any other pre-accession country) would be done following the EPPO system on PRA and the deliberations that take place in the EPPO Panel on PRA. Introducing this system of pest risk analysis in Slovenia was done as follows:

In month two of the project, November 2000, there was a general presentation by the pre-accession adviser, to the responsible persons of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, the Phytosanitary Inspection and the Diagnostic laboratories of the Research Institutions and University of Ljubljana. The full EPPO PRA and an interception PRA were introduced with the ins and outs of those protocols, the international basis, *etc.* All available papers were shown, distributed and the WEB-sites indicated.

During this meeting it was decided that the pre-accession adviser would visit all relevant diagnostic laboratories and explain the system of pest risk analysis in detail. This was done and visits were made to about six laboratories from December till February 2001. Most discussions were with one or two persons, in others there were some eight to ten staff involved.

In the initial meeting it was also decided that the adviser would draw up a list with realistic examples and that the relevant staff of the institutions would exercise with these examples. The examples were made in cooperation with the chair of the working group, Vlasta Knapič, Head of the Plant Health Department of MAFF, who actually requested those concerned to make a full EPPO PRA or an Interception PRA. This was done in February 2001 and some six weeks were allowed to complete the PRA. Although it was lifted over this very conference, some completed documents had already arrived and commented upon. Although it was originally decided to discuss a limited number of exercises in a plenary workshop, it was thought better to take out the most relevant points from the contributions and present these in a meeting with all concerned.

It is to be expected that after this discussion in May 2001 the diagnostic staff of the institutions are indeed able to execute an internationally accepted Pest Risk Analysis and at the same time that those actually requesting PRA's to be made, staff of the future Administration on Plant Health and Seeds, are able to ask the right questions.

3. REFERENCES

- Anon. 1997. Guidelines on Pest Risk Analysis. EPPO Bulletin 27, 277-305.
Anon. 1995. FAO. International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures no 2. Guidelines for pest risk analysis. IPPC Secretariat, FAO, Rome.