

FOREST INVASIVE SPECIES NETWORK FOR EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA (REUFIS)

Mandate

Background

A regional workshop for European and Central Asian countries was held in Hungary in June 2015 to promote the implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry and other forest health activities in the region. Participants highlighted increased threats to forests in Europe and Central Asia posed by the movement and establishment of forest invasive species, which is also exacerbated by climate change.

Combatting forest invasive species in the region is hampered by a lack of information and its dissemination. Workshop participants identified the need for a network or “platform” where scientists, managers and policy-makers can share information and experiences and coordinate forest invasive species activities and programmes within the region and beyond. Establishing information exchange networks and working groups on forest invasive species help to raise awareness, develop databases, facilitate exchange of information and strengthen institutional capacity in the respective region.

To initiate the establishment of a suitable “platform”, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia organized a “Forest Invasive Species in Europe and Central Asia” meeting in Minsk, Belarus from 6-7 September 2016. Representatives from 23 countries (including invited speakers) of Europe and Central Asia came together to tackle the shared problem of forest invasive species. The main objective of this meeting was to kick-off a functional network to foster integrated and dynamic forest pest management in the region and provide baseline data for informed decision-making.

Mission of the Forest¹ Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS)

The mission of the Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia (REUFIS) is to highlight the importance of using existing tools and structures and to exchange and share knowledge and information related to forest invasive species.

Objectives of REUFIS

The Network aims to:

¹ In this context forest means forest land, other wooded land and trees outside forests as per FAO definitions in Annex I.

- Enable sharing of information and experiences, coordinate activities on forest invasive species, raise awareness in eradication, control and management of forest invasive species, encourage publication and sharing of research results, early detection and monitoring strategies, and taxonomic support, and provide a communication link for all levels within and between member countries.
- Collaborate and cooperate with existing international and regional organizations, such as the FAO International Plant Convention (IPPC), the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) and dealing with forest invasive species, strengthen national capacities to manage forest pests, and provide decision-makers with baseline data for making informed decisions.
- Advocate compliance with phytosanitary regulations and provide policy advice on movement of forest invasive species.

Objectives with respective (provisional) activities outlined

[Note the activities list still needs to be completed by members]

- 1. To enable sharing of information and experiences, coordinate activities on forest invasive species, raise awareness in eradication, control and management of forest invasive species, encourage publication and sharing of research results, early detection and monitoring strategies, taxonomic support and provide a communication link for all levels within and between member countries.**
 - Use existing resources (expert databases, institutions at national level, small-scale geographical networks) to archive country databases.
 - Create an inventory of the major forest invasive species and common issues of the region to be used for forest resource assessment reports.
 - Raise awareness on forest invasive species and management.
 - Share regionally relevant research information including eradication, control and management methods and guidelines.
 - Organize joint field research among network countries and if appropriate collaborate with EUPHRESKO (European Plant Health Research Coordination) on joint research projects.
 - Establish a link for communication to share joint research activities in order to update information and knowledge base.
 - Provide taxonomic information of invasive species of the region.
- 2. To collaborate and cooperate with existing international and regional organizations, such as the FAO International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), dealing with forest health and invasive species, strengthen national capacities to manage forest pests, and provide decision-makers with baseline data for making informed decisions**

- Collaboration with existing organizations at international and regional level dealing with forest invasive species, such as EPPO, and the CBD.
- Share information on priority pest species, provide early warnings of impending threats, and suggest ways to prevent further spread.
- Alert country authorities to potential risks related to specific invasive species incursions including providing information on biology, ecology (including potential range), monitoring techniques and control measures.
- Update members of Network on current information about forest health in the region and recommend for policy makers objectives and measures for their prevention and control.
- Organize technical and coordination meetings as required and in collaboration with other organisations (e.g. EPPO, CBD), if appropriate.
- Facilitate exchange of expertise among member countries and with other organizations and networks.
- Strengthen capacity on detection and identification of forest invasive species at national levels.

3. To advocate compliance with phytosanitary regulations and provide policy advice on transboundary movement of forest invasive species.

- Provide guidance to national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) on national action plans, the collection of phytosanitary information and phytosanitary regulations in relation to forestry.
- In collaboration with NPPOs, organize training workshops on phytosanitary activities and capacity building at national level for forest technicians and other personnel.
- Identify partners, explore opportunities and provide trained experts to meet priority needs within each country.
- Harmonize methodology of forest invasive species data collection and assessment (i.e. through use of Permanent Sample Plots) throughout the region.
- Raise the awareness about and advocate for appropriate phytosanitary structures and resources to combat forest invasive species efficiently.
- Evaluate damage and assess losses to provide estimates of economic losses. This will determine appropriate management measures.

REUFIS members

The network is voluntary based and it is open to all countries in FAO Europe and Central Asia Region (FAO REU) (<http://www.fao.org/europe/countries/en/>).

Ownership and responsibility of the network

The Network is managed by the focal points of all current member countries and those that express interest in joining in the future. The Network may also assign professionals who show readiness to serve the network on behalf of their country and work to promote the network for the aim of reaching its objectives. The focal points representing their respective countries have the responsibility to run and coordinate its activities on a national level.

The focal points of the countries elect among each other a Secretary/Coordinator, and an executive committee that will coordinate and manage the network on an international level in cooperation with FAO.

Secretariat/Coordinator

The Secretariat/Coordinator will be selected by the members of the Network at a Network meeting. The rotation and term of Secretariat will be decided by the members.

It was agreed by the meeting participants that Dr. Ferenc Lakatos of the Institute of Silviculture and Forest Protection, University of West Hungary will act as interim Secretary of the Network to help prepare the mandate and establish the final network structure. The Secretariat will be selected in 2017.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee will be selected at the next meeting by the members of the network in 2017. An interim Executive Committee was also established by member countries to assist the Interim Secretariat in establishing the Network.

The Focal points and Executive Committee headed by the Secretariat/ Coordinator will decide the role and function of the committee, as well as determine the rotation of membership of the Executive committee. Additional items related to the running of the network will be finalized later. The Executive Committee will include five to six country focal points and an FAO representative.

Work plan for the Secretariat and Executive Committee

To be determined by Interim Secretariat and Interim Executive Committee at the next meeting in 2017.

National Representation (one person with possibility of having an alternate)

National representation will include a focal point from government and a professional (from national forest research institute) as an alternate

- Member countries may be represented by the forestry and/or research institutions of their choice. The designated institution(s) will identify the individual who will serve as the focal point for the country on the Network.

- Additional experts from members of the Network may be identified by the Secretariat and Executive Committee and will be invited to join the Network.

Role of FAO

FAO's mandate is to facilitate the establishment and organization of the network. Specific activities include the following.

- Coordination of activities in cooperation with the Secretary/Coordinator, Executive Committee, focal points, etc.
- Provision of technical assistance within the framework of its mandate and available resources.
- Coordination and collaboration with EPPO and other organisations working on forest invasive species.
- Co-organize Network meetings in cooperation with member institutions.
- Set-up a website that provides space for information sharing.
- Provision of required technical assistance to member countries. The provision of such technical assistance can be carried out under appropriate arrangements as identified and agreed upon by countries and the Organization.

Operation of the Network

The Executive Committee will decide on the operation of the Network. Sub-groups will be formed as needed to carry out specific functions related to objectives of the Network for specific sub-regions or forest health issues.

Funding and budget

Funding for technical assistance and functions of the network may be supported by FAO, member countries and partners depending on the availability of funds.

ANNEX I.

List of definitions by FAO²

Forest Land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use.

Invasive species³ are any species that are non-native to a particular ecosystem and whose introduction and spread causes, or are likely to cause socio-cultural, economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

Other wooded land: Land not classified as “Forest”, spanning more than 0.5 hectares; with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of 5–10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ; or with a combined cover of shrubs, bushes and trees above 10 percent. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use.

Woody Plants Outside Forests: Trees, bamboos, palms, shrubs and bushes found in Other Lands

² Different definitions may applied at national level

³ Suggested change by the REUFIS network: **Invasive species** are any species whose introduction or spread causes, or may cause, unacceptable socio-cultural, economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

ANNEX II.

List of the countries are members of the network as of October 2017

Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

REU Country	As of October 2017
Albania	x
Andorra	
Armenia	x
Austria	x
Azerbaijan	x
Belarus	x
Belgium	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	x
Bulgaria	x
Croatia	x
Cyprus	
Czech Republic	
Denmark	
Estonia	
Finland	
France	
Georgia	x
Germany	
Greece	
Hungary	x
Iceland	
Ireland	
Israel	
Italy	
Kazakhstan	
Kyrgyzstan	x
Latvia	x
Lithuania	
Luxemburg	
TFYR of Macedonia	
Malta	
Moldova	x
Monaco	
Montenegro	x
Netherlands	

Norway	x
Poland	x
Portugal	
Romania	x
Russian Federation	x
San Marino	
Serbia	x
Slovak Republic	x
Slovenia	x
Spain	
Sweden	x
Switzerland	x
Tajikistan	x
Turkey	
Turkmenistan	
Ukraine	x
United Kingdom	
Uzbekistan	x