

Plant Health and Biosecurity in the United Kingdom – An Accord – September 2019

Vision

Healthy plants are widely recognised as an integral part of the UK's natural capital and green infrastructure, and for the social, economic and environmental benefits they provide. Robust biosecurity measures and plant health management practices protect the plants we cultivate and the UK's natural flora from destructive plant pests¹.

Aim

The potential pathways for the spread and damage caused by plant pests must be well understood, then communicated and controlled through statutory and voluntary actions that strengthen biosecurity² and plant health.

The need for a strong Partnership

Thriving plant life is vital for people and nature, we must ensure the plants we cherish and plants we grow are protected from harmful plant pests.

There are many destructive plant pests, some of which have arrived into the UK recent years. These pests are causing unprecedented damage to the plants that grow in both our managed and natural landscapes. These include all plants growing in gardens (whether city or rural), farmland, forests and other natural habitats. If unchecked, more exotic plant pest introductions could cause further environmental harm and economic losses. In certain cases, climate change can exacerbate the damage from plant pests.

A robust and collective UK-wide response is urgently needed to protect and improve the health of the plant life upon which Society and nature is so reliant. To effectively control existing pests and protect the UK from potentially disastrous introductions, people and organisations must work together to a recognised set of principles and measures.

Funding and resourcing

The stakes of not protecting the UK's plant life are very high. Many UK businesses have experienced considerable losses due to pest outbreaks. Government has spent tens of millions of pounds in recent years to protect against, eradicate or control plant pests. Interest groups have reported harm to key habitats due to pests which have materially deteriorated the UK's natural capital. In summary, mitigation efforts and damage caused by pests have already cost the UK greatly. To avoid future losses, some of which may already be irreversible, funds and resources will be required.

By working together in partnership, the signatories of this accord aim to identify suitable sources of funding and ensure that resources are allocated and managed wisely. In short, prudent and carefully targeted investment should help protect the UK's plant life.

The Plant Health Biosecurity Accord

This Accord sets out a basis for government, industry and civil society to come together to acknowledge and build upon existing programmes of work to enhance biosecurity measures in the UK. The signatories to this accord recognise the importance of sustained partnership working to protecting the UK's plant life. This will require a transparent approach to information sharing with a view to ensuring that all work well together to reduce and avoid the threats from plant pests.

By signing this accord people and organisations agree to, where possible, share and work to the latest evidence and actions that relate to improving biosecurity in the UK. Signatories will aim to work together effectively and communicate widely the actions that all people can take to protect the UK's plant life from destructive plant pests.

¹ **Pest** - Any species, strain or biotype of plant, animal or pathogenic agent injurious to plants or plant products (International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures - 5. International Plant Protection Convention, 2017)

² **Biosecurity** - the exclusion, eradication or management of pests and diseases that pose a risk to the economy, environment, cultural and social values, including human health. [Biosecurity 2025: Protecting to Grow New Zealand](#).