ESENIAS-TOOLS: A project as a result of regional networking

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Question and Methods

Many important pest species have alien origin and their introductions and expansions have been increasing due to human activities and global change. Invasive alien species (IAS) threaten not only biodiversity and unmanaged areas but also socio-economy and managed areas. Most of alien species are not covered by the plant and animal health regimes and EU IAS regulations what might facilitate their spread. Networking on IAS and pests in different scales can be helpful to halt new introductions. ESENIAS (East and South European Network for Invasive Alien Species) was established in 2011 to facilitate solving IAS problems, in the regional level. A new regional project has just been launched: "East and South European Network for Invasive Alien Species – a tool to support the management of alien species in Bulgaria (ESENIAS-TOOLS)". The aim of this presentation is to introduce the project and show possible benefits to halt new pests.

In this respect networking and regional cooperation are crucial for management of alien species and pests in South East Europe being a bridge between Central Europe, Asia and Eastern Mediterranean.

Several issues that need to be addressed were detected:
* Fragmented or lack of information;
* Lack of common methodological approaches and guidelines;
* Low data harmonization, very difficult for comparison, e.g. cross-border issues are extremely difficult to tackle;
* No real region-wide information infrastructure;
* Not sufficiently developed cooperation between IAS experts at national and regional level;
* Low representation and integration of South East part of Europe in European and global IAS initiatives.

Results

This project, funded under the Programme BG03 "Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services" within the EEA FM (2009-2014), will result in networking and development of IAS tools within the framework of ESENIAS to support the management of alien species in Bulgaria and in the overall ESENIAS region. Eleven institutions from Bulgaria, Croatia, Iceland, Greece, R. Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey will take part in the project. Workshops, study visits and meetings are planned within the project. Current databases in the region will be renewed, fact sheets will be produced. The project will facilitate prevention of IAS introduction in the region developing tools for early detection and awareness rising. One of the aims of the project is to establish connections and collaborations with regional and international groups/organisations, what could contribute for integration of regional data and activities in NOBANIS, EEA, EWRS, IAPPS, ISOMED and EPPO.

The main outcome from the partnership will be a regional network fully integrated in European research area.
Expected main outputs are:
* joint standardised and harmonised methodology for data collection, analysis, database use, dissemination;
* lists of alien species and priority species in the region;
* IAS expert and responsible institution register, lists of projects and publications;
* Analysis of IAS legislation and management practices.
* An early warning tool including species alerts will be developed in order to increase awareness of experts, public administration and managers and to facilitate the IAS early detection and rapid response.

Conclusion

Introduction of new pest species in agricultural areas can be minimized applying preventive techniques and early detection systems for IAS, which are the most efficient and cost-effective methods. Networking through governmental and non-governmental organisations can be a useful tool for further studies/projects.

ICELAND
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eea grants

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East and South European
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www.ESENIAS.org

XVIII. International Plant Protection Congress (IPPC) 2015
"Mission possible: food for all through appropriate plant protection", August 24-27, 2015, Berlin, Germany