

# New method for assessing future tree and plant disease risks

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A new method for assessing the impacts and risks of potential future tree and plant pest and disease outbreaks has been developed by the University's Professor Robert Fraser as one of the key recommendations of the government [report](#) into biosecurity announced on 20 May.

Professor Fraser developed the new methodology as one of ten experts from leading universities sitting on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce.

The Taskforce's final report includes a recommendation to develop a 'prioritised UK Plant Health Risk Register' - which suggests use of a new 'horizon-scanning' methodology developed by Professor Fraser - as one of its key findings.

Professor Fraser said: 'My role on the Taskforce was very much one of looking ahead and finding a way of assessing impacts and prioritising the risks of future pest and disease outbreaks.

'One of the Taskforce's major objectives, as well as looking at ways the UK could strengthen its responsiveness and preparedness, was to find a way of assessing future economic, social and environmental impacts.

'That way, we can more effectively plan how to prioritise our spending to tackle future tree and plant pest and [disease outbreaks](#).'

The Taskforce was chaired by Professor Christopher Gilligan, of the University of Cambridge, and reported to Professor Ian Boyd, Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser.

It was established following the incursion of the Chalara pathogen into the UK from the European continent, which killed many [ash trees](#).

Provided by University of Kent

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