

EU must take urgent action on invasive species

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The EU must take urgent action to halt the spread of invasive species that are threatening native plants and animals across Europe, according to a scientist from Queen's University Belfast.

The threats posed by these species cost an estimated €12 billion each year across Europe. Professor Jaimie Dick, from the Institute for Global Food Security at Queen's School of Biological Sciences, is calling on the EU to commit long-term investment in a European-wide strategy to manage the problem.

Invasive species are considered to be among the major threats to native biodiversity in Europe. The call to action follows the publication of a paper 'Tackling Invasive Alien Species in Europe: the Top 20 Issues', in the peer-reviewed journal '*Management of Biological Invasions*'. The report's authors say it should inform future EU policy for managing [invasive species](#).

The paper resulted from an international meeting of invasive species experts who gathered in Galway (Ireland) last year to identify the critical issues for tackling invasive species in Europe. The Freshwater Invasives: Networking for Strategy (FINS) conference was led by Inland Fisheries Ireland, Queen's, and the Institute of Technology, Sligo. It brought together more than 150 scientists, academics, policy makers and politicians with the aim of informing impending EU legislation on [alien species](#).

Professor Dick said: "Alien plant and animal species cause environmental, economic and social damage across Europe, and their rate of invasion is set to increase in the coming years. The EU has formulated a comprehensive plan to address the threats posed by these species, but adequate resourcing by the EU and Member States, in terms of funding, staff and equipment, will be crucial in ensuring this plan is put into action.

"Invasive species cost an estimated €12 billion each year across Europe, including around €261 million on the island of Ireland and £1.7 billion in Great Britain. Their impact ranges from upsetting native ecosystems, to damaging the physical environment and even threatening human and animal health; hence the cost to agriculture, fisheries and forestry, as well as the expense of control and eradication programmes.

"The existing haphazard, fragmented approach from EU countries, characterised by communication breakdowns and insufficient resources, will not suffice if we are to protect our ecosystems against these invaders. The EU must ensure sufficient funding to achieve its goal of long-term, coherent, sustainable action to manage invasive species. Through the FINS conference, 20 issues that will be critical to the success of any EU strategy have now been identified. It is vital that EU decision-makers consider these issues when formulating their plans and allocating resource.

"Among the 20 issues identified is the need to raise awareness of biosecurity across Europe and the implementation of European-wide legislation for this; the dedication of resources for the long-term management of invasive species; the development of new technology to detect new invasives, and early warning systems to alert EU states to their spread; new European-wide risk assessment methods; emergency powers to eradicate alien species once they become established; and effective communications to raise awareness of invasive species, so the

public will know what to look for and how to report it."

Professor Jaimie Dick and Queen's PhD student Jenny Barbour were key organisers of the FINS conference, which was called specifically with the aim of assessing the current position regarding [invasive alien species](#) in Europe. Experts from the UK and Ireland, and across North America, Europe, Africa and Asia joined forces to prioritise the key issues for the management of invasive species.

More information: The resulting paper, 'Tackling Invasive Alien Species in Europe: the Top 20 Issues', is available on the Management of Biological Invasions website at [www.reabic.net/journals/mbi/20 ... 014_Caffrey_etal.pdf](http://www.reabic.net/journals/mbi/2014/014_Caffrey_etal.pdf)

Provided by Queen's University Belfast

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