

## **The invalid method of construct in regard to the EU-list on invasive alien species**

Invasive species have unfortunately always been around since man travelled the globe and therefore gave species a chance to rapidly disperse to other areas outside their natural habitat.

In many cases these foreign species aren't capable to sustain themselves for any serious amount of time and numbers decline faster than is needed to sustain a viable population.

Others however settle comfortably in their new habitat and can become a serious threat to native species.

Many examples show the serious dangers of invasive species, like the enormous plague of cane toads in Australia. These huge amphibians were used to manage the numbers of pest species that invaded the sugarcane fields, becoming a far more serious problem than the species they were sent to eradicate.

The countries in the European Union are not immune to invasive species and legislation is needed to protect indigenous species of plants and animals as well as preserve habitats and human health.

At this time, more and more species have a chance to become invasive in their own right, due to the intensive import and export of people, food and non-food products. Also changes in environmental conditions can make places more inviting to alien species.

The depletion of endemic or indigenous species can also result in a niche for new species to fill, that can upset the balance needed to keep these places healthy and thriving.

It is therefore very reasonable to expect nations to start cooperating to halt the flow of problem species into their borders.

The problem however is extremely complicated for many different reasons.

First and foremost we cannot expect species to honour boundaries, put up by humans. In many cases these borders are only visible on maps and sometimes controlled by border patrols that won't inspect every bird, insect or plant pollen that crosses these imaginary lines.

Secondly due to the high level of international trade, which requires the transport of goods, more and more species can travel distances they normally won't dare to undertake.

Sometimes animals or plants are deliberately released in a for those species foreign habitat. Most of the time these species can't survive and are predated intensively or simply cannot survive climatological conditions.

The current list, constructed for the purposes to protect the European Union from species that could be considered hazardous, is not based on research which takes many if all conditions into account to describe a species as invasive. These criteria are stated in article 4, section 3 of REGULATION (EU) No 1143/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species.

An invasive species has to be able to settle on the long term in habitat conditions that can sustain its needs, while in the meantime have such an aggressive character (behavioural or in numbers) that indigenous species suffer its presence and can even go extinct. Some other species can endanger human health or have an extreme impact on a countries economy.

Most species on the list are only “ risk” species under very specific circumstances. These circumstances include the right type of habitat, the right and sufficient availability of food, the correct climate conditions and so on.

Questions can be asked when looking at the proposed list, why the decision has been made in consideration of a plant or animal when the risk factor is so very low? Also species that pose a serious risk are not placed on this list at all.

Some of the most important aspects of invasive species is their ability to multiply in sufficient numbers to threaten existing conditions.

In the case of the turtle species on the list, it’s reasonable to think that those animals might become a problem in countries where habitat is readily available, food is abundant and climate conditions are moderate or even subtropical for these animals to survive for more than a single generation.

Therefore countries in Northern Europe will never face an invasive problem.

More likely are insects and other invertebrate species to become invasive as well as fungi or some types of aquatic plants. Yet, insects are not taken in very serious consideration when looking at the list. The error of this thought process can be a terrifying threat to agricultural nations and areas. It’s questionable why of all species this specific group is left mostly unexamined. So more research needs to be done to determine which animals and plants actually pose a threat.

After many talks with specialist groups, it has become clear that the current list has more economic basis in its development than arguments that fit the discussion of invasiveness.

If economic risks are taken into account, and they should, it must be a necessity to also discuss the consequences of people and companies that rely on species mentioned for their income.

The livelihood of people should be protected while writing legislation that was not present at the moment a business was started. If this is the case due to a strong necessity to protect areas and species, those people and companies should be compensated.

It’s unreasonable to think that a two year period is sufficient for any company to stop their current production, importation, breeding and transportation of species or products thereof without any loss in revenue and can therefore not stay healthy and probably go out of business cause the time period and additional costs for changing the primary species to a secondary one is far too time consuming and expensive.

In an economy struggling to rise above a recession, such legislation is neither advisable or reasonable without compensation.

The Union must be held accountable for the species on the list and the consequences of putting them on there in the first place. Without strong arguments why a species deserves to be on the list, taking into account that this is the case for all the countries in the Union, it simply shouldn’t be possible.

When arriving to a conclusion that a species is actually a threat to others and could be an invasive risk species, the facts should be made public and be open to discussion. If all the data suggests a species is or will be a threat, prohibitions to keep, import, export, sell, buy or transport those species, should, taking the principle of proportionality into account, should be considered.

But if the same data suggests that species not present on this list, should be, they must be placed on this list right away without exception.

A methodology, as stated in article 5 section 3, of the Regulation should be developed to determine the invasive character of any living thing.

At this moment such a methodology is not present and therefore the current list should be discarded.

The only evidence for a single species being invasive that can currently be taken into consideration are the guidelines for research listed in article 5 section 1 of the same regulation as mentioned earlier.

However it is clearly the case that most if not all species on the current list, lack sufficient data to be introduced to this list cause not all data comes to the conclusion that justifies their presence.

More research is simply needed to validate the current species list. The fact that species like the muntjak deer are on the list of mammals but species like the domesticated housecat isn't even considered is truly mesmerizing when it's factual that this species is one of the most destructive animals and their lineage is absolutely exotic and should by all accounts be labelled invasive. The reasons for this are most of all emotional in nature. This species is dear to our heart and is responsible for millions and millions in revenue annually. So it's an economically important animal. Criteria like these make the current list invalid and should not be used in its current state.

Invasive species are a risk, but it should be the responsibility of separate nations to determine which species pose a potential threat and which ones could be important or significantly so for people and companies within the boundaries of state law, this is a right for every country as stated in article 12 as long as not in conflict with union law.

When a certain species poses a risk for more than a single country, the union as a whole should decide its fate but certain exceptions must be made in regards to countries where these species can never become an invasive threat, but those countries must be obligated to regulate all aspects of keeping these species that ensures that they'll never arrive on potential invasive ground.

Species that could become a threat for the Union or various countries within the union should provoke much needed cooperation and research between nations to ensure the eradication of that invasive problem, but no species can be placed on any proposed list until all criteria of article 4 section 3 and article 5 section 1 are met.

For the moment, the problems and inconsistencies of the process leading up to the development of the list are more a threat to the democratic process than the species on the list are likely to become the invasive nightmare the union fears.

Hopefully more risk assessment research will follow before a list like the one proposed will be a reality.

Kind regards,