

Round table discussion

Invasive pests threaten the citrus production in the Mediterranean countries

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Panel

- Panagiotis Milonas, Benaki Phytopathological Institute, Athens Greece
- Christos Arabatzis, Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, Athens, Greece
- David Horta Lopes, Universidade dos Açores, Portugal
- Darren Kriticos, Cervantes LTD, Australia

Intensified human mobility and commodities trading over the last decades together with climate change have contributed to an increased rate of invasion events globally. Biological invasions pose major concerns on national and regional economies, ecosystems functions, sustainable production of agricultural goods, pesticide use, conservation and epidemiology of vector borne diseases. Europe and the Mediterranean countries are listed among the most vulnerable areas and consist hot spots of invasion, and citrus cultivation is at constant risk. Indeed, there is list of pests that successfully invaded the Mediterranean citrus orchards inducing severe economic losses to growers and restriction to trading of fruit commodities and seedlings. Despite intense efforts within the European Union to impose, support and coordinate the implementation of actions to address invasive pests, there is an increasing record of invasion events and a rather slow and often unsuccessful response. There are hurdles in the implementation of European legislation and diverse response of the different countries that result to slow and often not aggressive response to an invasion event. The European Union supports research and innovation activities such as the Horizon 2020 funded project FF-IPM “*In-silico* boosted, pest prevention and off-season focused IPM against new and emerging fruit flies” to address invasive pests in citrus and other fruit producing systems. Other initiatives are also supported by the EU to address invasive pests through research funding, activities of the European Food Safety Authority and coordination of activities of member states. The current discussion focuses on invasive pests that concern the citrus production and trading and envisions to address scientific, regulatory, and trading aspects that operate at the different phases of invasion. We expect to come up with a list of policy recommendations and a layman report to widely communicate recent research advances and raise awareness of the importance of invasive pest for the citrus industry and the need for established coordinated response actions.

Keywords: Biological invasions, fruit flies, quarantine pests, phytosanitary regulations, establishment, eradication

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