



RISK ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL FOR INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES: EXAMPLE OF *PLOTOSUS LINEATUS*

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Abstract

The EU Regulation No 1143/2014 and other international agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity, require that the risks posed by invasive Alien species (IAS), present or future, are assessed. Indeed risk assessments underpin IAS policies in many ways: informing legislation; providing justification of restrictions in trade or consumer activities; prioritising surveillance and rapid response. From a review of existing risk assessment protocols developed and used widely, it was decided that the most appropriate is the NARPA protocol, modified by the UK, and refined during an EU study aiming at developing risk assessments to tackle priority species and enhance prevention. A first list of IAS published in 2016 included 37 species of EU concern, none marine. This was revised in 2017 with the addition of 12 more species, again no marine. Considering the threat *Plotosus lineatus* poses to EU marine waters, it was selected as a potential candidate for the list of IAS of EU concern. The new protocol (EU Non-Native Organism Risk Assessment Scheme) was applied to assess the likelihood of its introduction, establishment, spread and impacts. The new RA Protocol is rigorous and detailed and requires information from a vast array of different sources to make an informed assessment of the likely future distribution of the species, identify and quantify to the best possible extent the involved commodities and stakeholders and assess potential management methods. Knowledge gaps and areas of urgent research are highlighted and were predictably notable for a new invader such as *Plotosus lineatus*. At the same time, a recent invasion presents a higher potential for more effective intervention and management measures, which are thoroughly addressed by a dedicated section of the protocol.

Keywords: Risk assessment protocol, invasive alien species, *Plotosus lineatus*
