

Position Paper on Regulation of Invertebrate Biological Control Agents

Invertebrate Biocontrol Agents (IBCA)s are key elements in IPM systems in agricultural ecosystems and especially greenhouses. They offer a safe alternative for the use of pesticides and are effective also in cases where chemical pest control fails because of resistance. As pests are often non-native local natural enemies are not always able to control them and the introduction of exotic species may be required. Although there are hardly any examples of IBCAs causing problems for the environment, we do have the obligation to assess the risks of releasing a species in a new environment prior to its release.

Different countries do have regulations for the import and release of IBCAs. However, requirements are currently not standardised and not always appropriate. IBMA therefore has the following recommendations for the implementation of regulation on the release of IBCAs:

1. We refer to studies already conducted by IOBC, ERBIC and REBECA on evaluating risks of the release of IBCAs (references IPPC, REBECA final reports, Van Lenteren, 2003 and Laengle and Strasser (2008)).
2. A Risk Assessment should be primarily based on available scientific knowledge. Before starting Risk Assessment tests, all relevant available data should therefore be collected in a dossier and submitted to competent national authorities.
3. We recognise EPPO Standard 6/2 on safe use of Biological Control as being the guideline for data requirements for such a dossier.
4. In case that not all assessment criteria are covered by literature data, additional experiments need to be conducted by the applicant in conference with national authorities.
5. Risk Assessment testing should also be based on the principles described in EPPO Standard 6/2. Feasible methods for Risk Assessment should be further developed in cooperation between IOBC and IBMA.
6. Risk Assessments on non-target organisms should not focus on species commonly accepted as pests.
7. Beneficial nematodes should be included in the same regulation as for Arthropods and information requirements should not exceed those described in EPPO standard 6/2.
8. Competent national authorities should evaluate the need for further Risk Assessment testing based on the dossier and in cooperation with the applicant.
9. Proper definitions of terms (exotics, established, native, etc.) should be developed between IOBC and IBMA.

10. Countries should have competent authorities that are able to evaluate dossiers in a professional way. In those countries where this is not the case, independent external experts should be consulted.
11. We encourage the formation of an Expert Group in Europe, consisting of independent experts on biological control, which can be consulted both by national authorities and applicants for evaluation of a new IBCA.
12. We encourage mutual recognition of Risk Assessments between countries to avoid duplication of work, provided that relevant agricultural conditions are sufficiently similar.
13. Total costs and time involved in Risk Assessment should be proportional in order not to discourage the development of new products based on IBCAs.
14. In case of new exotic pest species being a threat for existing IPM systems and native flora and fauna, a “Fast Track” procedure should be considered in cooperation with the Expert Group.
15. We strongly recommend developing national regulations in full cooperation with IBMA-IBCA, also via its national delegations where present.