

Editorial

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In a context marked by the intensification of trade, the acceleration of population mobility and greater frequency of extreme climatic changes, crops are becoming increasingly vulnerable, especially due to invasive species. Most of the time, these invasive species manage to adapt to the spaces they invade and may significantly change existing ecosystems. They consequently become a growing problem for the countries as they affect the key sectors of their economy and present a series of emerging risks. This is particularly the case in Southern European, North African and Middle Eastern countries.

The prevention of their entrance or the rapid elimination of the inoculum once entered in a specific area or the containment of their spread if their elimination fails are the mandatory control measures which all countries should apply fulfilling the quarantine principles as it occurs in the human and animal field. Based on the experience and knowledge gained in the countries where these species are present and on the research set up in the countries in which these invasions are occurring, specific control measures should be adopted for a successful management always in the respect of quarantine principles. Therefore, for a successful control of these phytosanitary emergencies, the Mediterranean countries have to address this challenge by working together. These species have many impacts on agricultural systems but can also affect human health and the environment. Moreover, the economic impacts are significant. The Mediterranean is particularly affected and vulnerable to invasive species. Recent concerns focus on the *Xylella fastidiosa* that is affecting the olive trees in the Puglia region in Southern Italy. However, this case reminds us that other dangers for Mediterranean agriculture and ecosystems exist.



Bringing together nearly 50 international experts (thanks to all of them for the contribution), this *Watch Letter n°33* therefore aims at presenting the problem of invasive species as a whole, by providing several specific cases in different countries of the Mediterranean region. The CIHEAM has been working on this issue for several years, by seeking to advance and share knowledge and preventive or curative techniques at Euro-Mediterranean level. Besides, convinced that in the context of trade globalisation, invasive species represent a real economic, social and ecological threat for Mediterranean countries, the CIHEAM has been ceaselessly alerting the international community to the growing complexity of this issue.

More research, more interdisciplinary approaches, more cooperation and more communication will be crucial to adapt to the multidimensional challenges of invasive species. The articles published in this issue show that the subject deserves more attention from policy makers, media observers and development actors at a time when climate, agriculture and food security challenges should be addressed with a lot more interaction.

