Overview of NAPPO RSPM 7
Guidelines for Petition for First Release of Non-Indigenous Phytophagous
or Phytopathogenic Biological Control Agents

Purpose: Weed biological control programs prevent or manage agricultural and environmental losses by using natural enemies (e.g., predators or pathogens) of weeds to suppress their populations. Before receiving authorization to release a non-native or imported biological control agent (BCA) that either feeds on (= phytophagous) or causes disease in (= phytopathogenic) weeds, all potential ecological and economic impacts must be carefully assessed. A petition for the first release of a weed BCA must be submitted to the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of the country of release before its release is approved.

Contents: The body of RSPM 7 describes information that should be contained in the petition for 1st release of a non-native weed BCA into a NAPPO member country. Appendix 1 of RSPM 7 contains a standardized petition format.

Summary of RSPM 7: The petition for 1st release of weed BCAs should include information on:

i) the purpose of the proposed release, documenting the need and reasons for choosing the particular BCA; location of the rearing/containment facility; the timing and location of the release; and organizations that will be involved in the release; ii) the target weed, including its taxonomy, biology, reproductive potential, and global distribution; vulnerable life stage and plant part to the BCA; economically and ecologically important species related to the target weed present in North America; iii) the BCA, including its taxonomy, identification methods, biology, reproductive potential, and geographic range; history of past use; source of the BCA; methods for eliminating pests and pathogens affecting the BCA; methods for handling the BCA in containment; and other closely related weed genera; iv) host-specificity testing, including information that confirms the BCA will only impact the target weed, including laboratory tests and field surveys on closely related plants, non-related plants, rare and endangered species, and economically important plants; v) environmental and economic impacts of releasing the BCA, including expected benefits (such as reduced pesticide use and other controls, reduced environmental or production losses); impacts on humans and other vertebrates, direct impacts on target or non-target plants; indirect impacts on organisms that depend on the target plant; direct or indirect impacts on endangered species or the physical environment; and contingency plans to mitigate undesired environmental impacts; vi) post-release monitoring plan that tracks establishment and spread of the BCA; target weed and BCA densities and distribution over time; and impacts on non-target species; and vii) pre-release compliance, including information on the planned location and timing of the 1st release, clearly labelled reference specimens suitable for DNA testing deposited in the national collection of the permitting country.

Please read RSPM 7 for a more complete description of the guidelines for preparing a petition for the 1st release of a non-native BCA of weeds into a NAPPO member country.

Photo by Scott Bauer  https://www.ars.usda.gov/oc/images/photos/oct00/k9080-1/