

# Stopping the Spread of INVASIVE SPECIES

Protecting nature and livelihoods



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Invasive species are a serious and growing threat to global biodiversity. Their impacts can be far-reaching—threatening human well being, disrupting economies and damaging the land and water that native plants and animals need to survive. Urgent action is needed now to prevent new introductions and stop further spread.

## **A growing threat**

Invasive species are the subset of non-native plants, animals and microorganisms that spread quickly and aggressively when introduced by human intervention to areas beyond their normal ranges. Often these introduced species cause dramatic environmental changes that lead to declines or extinctions of native populations. The most harmful invaders can completely transform diverse and productive ecosystems into nearly sterile land and waters. Agriculture, industry and even human health can be threatened.

Invasive species are spreading around the world at an accelerating rate. Rapid increases in global trade and travel are enabling more and more animals, plants and diseases to be transported from their native environments into new territories. The economic impacts are already being felt. The estimated damage from invasive species worldwide totals more than \$1.4 trillion – five percent of the global economy. Comb-jellies introduced to the Black Sea from the United States in 1993 destroyed commercial fishing, costing thousands of jobs. The arrival of the South American cactus moth in Mexico could threaten an industry based on cactus worth almost \$200 million annually, which directly supports over 40,000 households.

## **Focusing on Prevention**

The Nature Conservancy has over two decades of experience controlling invasive species and mitigating their impact on natural areas. Our experience has proven that prevention is one of the most cost-efficient strategies in combating invasive species. It can save millions in future costs of control, human health impacts and agricultural losses. At the heart of effective prevention are robust international, regional and domestic policies. For the past five years, the Conservancy has been working as part of the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) to support national efforts and assist in the development of a strong international policy framework to tackle the threat.

## **An opportunity for action**

The in-depth review at the Convention on Biological Diversity's 9th Conference of Parties in Bonn provides one of the biggest opportunities in a decade to achieve action on invasive species. As part of GISP, the Conservancy is working to support three main strategies to achieve tangible results to stop invaders:

## 1 National Frameworks

Countries are at different stages in identifying and responding to the threat of invasive species. There is a strong need for a recognized process, endorsed by the CBD, to enable countries to implement the necessary stages to developing fully operational invasive species prevention and management systems. GISP has identified the main stages required to implement these national frameworks, from the initial planning and assessment stages through to the development of legal systems and customized prevention measures for imports. We are supporting countries to implement these frameworks, using steps that are sensitive to limited capacity and that will build political awareness and competence as work progresses.

### Brazil Developing a national framework

In 2005, the Nature Conservancy and the Horus Institute launched the first nationwide survey on the impact of invasive species in Brazil. Funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Environment, the survey provided a comprehensive picture of the threat, including a list of more than 200 invasive plant and animal species. Subsequently, the Brazilian government has provided access to funding resources for invasive species management projects and joined GISP's Ten Nations Initiative – a coalition of forward thinking countries dedicated to working on invasive species at national, regional and international levels. Currently, the Conservancy is working with the government and other partners to develop a comprehensive national invasive species strategy and corresponding legislation.



Invasive *brachiaria* grass in the Atlantic Forest, Brazil

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## 2 Regional Coordination

Regional efforts to combat invasive species have proven particularly effective. For example, together the Pacific Invasives Learning Network and the Pacific Invasives Initiative have helped develop a regional network to identify and share best practices and design a region-wide response to new invaders such as the destructive red fire ant. Regional efforts help countries to share limited resources and collectively build knowledge and capacity. Additionally, countries with more developed systems can help their neighbors with information, expertise and potential models, a role that New Zealand has played effectively in the Pacific. GISP is working with the CBD to highlight the potential of regional country leaders and recognize the value of regional institutions and their need for additional resources to support national implementation.

## 3 International Guidance for Priority Pathways

The growth of international trade has opened many new pathways for the introduction of invasive species. Several key pathways still lack any sort of regulation or guidance. The CBD has identified approximately 20 of the most critical pathways and policy gaps, many of which cross into the jurisdiction of other international organizations. GISP is working with the CBD and others to prioritize action on these pathways, particularly where action can support ongoing work by other organizations. Priority pathways to be addressed include live animal imports, civil aviation, biofouling and development assistance.

### Winning the Battle against Invasive Species

The threat posed by invasive species is immense, but progress is possible. By supporting national action, developing strong regional networks and creating new guidelines to block pathways for introduction we can significantly reduce the spread of invasive species. By acting now, we can save billions in the costs of mitigating the impacts of invaders and prevent further damage to fragile natural systems.

The Nature Conservancy 

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