



Reference laboratory for diagnosis

For quarantine and new pests with a high damage potential our Institute's laboratories serve as national reference laboratories in order to ensure and harmonise the reliability of diagnostics in Germany. The fields of bacteriology, entomology, forest quarantine, mycology and nematology are covered. The laboratories provide reference material and carry out inter-laboratory comparative testing. Other institutes of the JKI deal with further groups of pests. In certain cases, the diagnostic results of the official laboratories of the Federal States are confirmed. In addition, there is a close exchange with the European Reference Laboratories organised at EU level.

Exports of plants and plant products to third countries

In order to ensure fair and rule-based trade of plants and plant products to countries outside the EU, we compile specific information relevant to plant health. On this basis, third countries carry out risk analyses and formulate import conditions. JKI advises the Ministry in negotiations with third countries. In addition, the Institute provides information on existing import requirements of third countries and participates in close cooperation with the Ministry in national, EU and international committees on export issues.



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Who we are

The Institute for national and international Plant Health is part of the Julius Kühn-Institute (JKI), the Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants. It is a research institution and authority in the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Ministry). Our scientists assess the risk of introduction and spread of quarantine pests of plants, warn in case of new risks and are involved in the coordination of official controls in Germany. They advise the Ministry on relevant legislation and standards to minimise these risks. Our work is an important element in keeping plants healthy and contributes to sustainable agriculture and the conservation of biodiversity.

Our challenge

In our globalized world, the trade in plants and plant products as well as the worldwide tourism have increased significantly. This increases also the risk of spreading harmful pests and invasive plants.

In its new environment, an introduced pest often has no natural enemies, fewer competitors, or it encounters particularly susceptible plant species. Control is often difficult. Therefore, new harmful organisms can cause considerable economic and ecological damage.



Our tasks

We want to prevent the introduction of dangerous pests. Should it come to that, then we help to ensure that effective measures are taken for the eradication or containment of the infestation. With our own research, we develop the technical basis for such preventive and quarantine measures.

The protection of the health of propagating and planting material is also one of our tasks (health quality). The aim is to provide healthy, high-quality planting material that is free from regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQPs) occurring in the EU that can cause significant damage to crops.

Our statutory tasks are laid down in the Plant Protection Act and the Plant Health Act. Accordingly, we inform and advise the Ministry, we are designated as the EU coordination and contact point for plant health issues and, as the central authority, we ensure the exchange of information and technical coordination with the plant protection services of the Federal States in Germany.

Research and risk analyses

We focus our research on particularly risk-relevant pests and invasive alien plants and on their diagnostics. We also prepare pest risk analyses that form a basis for our work. For this purpose we analyse commodity flows and pathways of new pests and their potential for establishment and spread, assess potential damage to the economy and the environment, and identify countermeasures. Finally, it can be concluded whether preventive measures are necessary and import restrictions can be justified internationally.

Early warning and surveys

If the national plant protection authorities detect new or already regulated harmful organisms in Germany this is notified to the Institute. The information is recorded in EU databases, validated and forwarded to all competent authorities in the EU. With this system, authorities in the EU inform each other about possible risks.



Sources of infestation are thus identified and traced back so that timely action can be taken. In addition, as part of the early warning system, the presence of Union quarantine pests is systematically monitored. The Institute prepares nationwide survey plans, coordinates their implementation by the plant protection services of the Federal States, evaluates the results and forwards them to the EU Commission and the other Member States. In this way, introduced harmful organisms can be detected at an early stage and controlled in a targeted manner in Germany and the EU.

International standards and legislation

Phytosanitary measures (e.g. import controls, inspection of operators or eradication programmes) are based on binding national and EU harmonised legislation in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/2031. International standards of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) or the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) are also relevant. There are 184 signatory states to the IPPC worldwide.

Together with our European partners we develop EU-wide regulations in committees and expert panels of the EU Commission. In many cases, this is based on scientific opinions from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Our Institute cooperates with EFSA in various committees and carries out projects funded by EFSA. We also cooperate intensively with EPPO and IPPC at European and international level in the development of phytosanitary standards.

At the national level, the Institute develops guidelines that serve the uniform implementation of monitoring and control measures by the plant protection services in Germany.