

# SGHN. Position paper

## *Eucalyptus* Plantations

Law 42/2007 and Royal Decree 630/2013 defines “*alien invasive species*” as one which “*introduces or establishes itself into an ecosystem or a natural or semi-natural habitat, and is an agent of change and a menace for native biologic diversity, either because of its invasive behaviour, or because of the risk of genetic contamination*”. Likewise, Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 states that “*alien invasive species*” is “*an alien species whose introduction or spread has been shown to be a threat or to have adverse impacts on biodiversity and associated ecosystem services*”.

All eucalyptus species are from Australia and nearby islands. Its expansion in the rest of the world is owed to human interaction. Because of this, all eucalyptus in Galicia are alien species.

In Galicia and Portugal the ability of *E. globulus* to colonize areas outside plantations and to spread (naturalisation) in plantations and in their borders is well-known, and that both the spread and the settlement are favoured by fires. Therefore, considering the size of the land occupied by eucalyptus today (425,000 ha in pure or mixed masses), its broad spread across the three coastal provinces, the high incidence of forest fires (half of all in Spain in less than 6% of the land), and the vast road net (almost 50,000 km), the perfect conditions for eucalyptus to display their invasiveness are met in Galicia.

It is well documented too that eucalyptus are a change agent and a menace for native biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Because of this, all eucalyptus in Galicia are alien invasive species and SGHN considers that they should be included in the Spanish Catalogue of Alien Invasive Species and that administrations must begin to take action to control and eradicate them.

It is also necessary to consider the Galician state of affairs and the socio-economic situation with reference to eucalypt plantations. Consequently, the necessary agreements and adequate deadlines should be established to minimize the economic impact on the owners of operations and the industry.

For all of the above, SGHN regards as imperative that, from now on, administrations shall:

- Prohibit new eucalyptus plantations throughout Galicia.
- Remove eucalyptus in all publicly owned lands.
- Demand the removal of all “unregulated/illegal” eucalyptus plantations not made in accordance with the current legislation.
- Incentivise the removal of all eucalyptus in protected natural areas.
- Allow the operation until the end of logging in the rest of the current plantations, exerting an exhaustive control to avoid their spread to adjacent areas.
- Plan a gradual reduction of the land currently occupied by plantations of eucalyptus to ensure their eradication in a realistic time frame.
- Establish appropriate measures to avoid that eucalyptus plantations, given their impact on circulating flows and water reserves, may affect the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

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