



# Invasive Alien Species

## Uninvited Company

Invasive alien species are species living, and often thriving, outside their natural habitat and threatening native biodiversity. Introduced by people, whether deliberately through activities such as fish farming, or unintentionally through transport, international development aid, scientific research, application of biocontrol agents or the pet trade, these species, to be considered invasive, must successfully out-compete native organisms, spread through its new environment, increase in population density and harm ecosystems in its introduced range.

Increasing travel, trade and tourism have facilitated intentional and unintentional movement of species beyond natural biogeographical barriers, where they can produce substantial environmental and economic damage. Their negative effects are exacerbated by climate change, pollution, habitat loss and human-induced disturbance. Increasingly, the domination by a few invasive species increases global homogenization of biodiversity, reducing local diversity and distinctiveness.

### Why it is important:

- Invasive species are considered one of the main direct drivers of biodiversity loss globally
- These species occur in all taxonomic groups, including animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms, and can affect all types of ecosystems
- Invasive alien species can change the community structure and species composition of native ecosystems directly by out-competing indigenous species for resources
- Native ecosystems that have undergone human-induced disturbance are often more prone to alien invasions because of decreased competition from native species
- Islands are especially vulnerable to invasive species because they are naturally isolated from strong competitors and predators and often have ecological niches that have not been filled because of the distance from colonizing populations
- The economic costs of invasive alien species are significant. Total annual costs, including losses to crops, pastures and forests, as well as environmental damages and control costs, are conservatively estimated to be in the hundreds of billions of dollars and possibly more than \$1 trillion.

### What the CBD is doing:

Recognizing that there is an urgent need to address the impact of invasive alien species (IAS), the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), established IAS as a cross-cutting issue at its fourth meeting. At its sixth meeting, the COP adopted Guiding Principles for the Prevention, Introduction and Mitigation of Impacts of Alien Species that Threaten Ecosystems, Habitats or Species.

The Executive Secretary of the CBD has prepared an in-depth review of the ongoing work on these species for consideration by COP 9 and has consulted with relevant international bodies and instruments on whether and how to address the lack of international standards covering the problem, in particular



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animals that are not pests of plants under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and will report on the results of these consultations at COP 9.

The COP is expected to promote measures for compiling experience, good practices and the practical capacity of countries to deal with invasive species and restore ecosystems, and for raising awareness of the public sectors of the economy, and decision-makers on the impacts and causes of the problem.

**For more information:**

[www.cbd.int/invasive](http://www.cbd.int/invasive)

IAS: [www.cbd.int/invasive/background.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/invasive/background.shtml)

COP decisions: [www.cbd.int/invasive/cop-decisions.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/invasive/cop-decisions.shtml)

Guidance and Tools: [www.cbd.int/invasive/tools.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/invasive/tools.shtml)

Documents: [www.cbd.int/invasive/documents.shtml](http://www.cbd.int/invasive/documents.shtml)



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Convention on Biological Diversity

