

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	162/12/026
Project Title	Towards sustainable management of alien invasive weeds in southern China
Country(ies)	UK, China
UK Organisation	CABI Bioscience (an institute of CAB International), Silwood Park, Ascot, Berks. SL5 7TA
Collaborator(s)	Institute of Biological Control (IBC), Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), Beijing, China Guangdong Entomological Institute (GEI), Guangzhou, China
Report date	31 st November 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	http://www.cabi-bioscience.org 'Invasive Species Management' – (scroll down) 'Current ISM Projects' – (next page) 'Mikania micrantha in Southern China. Towards sustainable management of invasive alien weeds'

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

The testing of the mikania rust fungus against 10 sunflower varieties, as requested by the China Import and Export Inspection Bureau (IEIB), was completed under quarantine in Beijing. As expected, none of the varieties became infected. This was followed by intensive discussions between BCI and the IEIB, which culminated with permission for BCI to undertake an 'experimental release' on Neiling Ding Island, where some repeated host specificity testing would be carried-out in the field before 'proper' (= full scale) release of the rust on the mainland. In mid-September 2005, Fu Weidong from BCI transported rust infected mikania plants to Neiling Ding, and undertook the experimental release of the rust in the field plots. The issue of the rust infecting the native *Mikania cordata* did not appear to be causing any further concern to the authorities. The above is all within the timetable for this reporting period set out in the 2004/5 Annual Report.

Note that CABI have repeatedly reinforced the fact that once the rust is in the environment, the chance of eradicating it is slight. An 'experimental release' is not a realistic concept with most fungi. CABI have also made it clear that the rust spores are likely to be capable of travelling the few kilometres between the island and the mainland, i.e. the rust may not be contained on Neiling Ding

As discussed in the previous report, CABI has been trying to obtain official permission from the correct Argentine Authority to use the rust in China, a procedure required under the CBD. At that stage we had been informed that there was no official framework within the national authorities for issuing permission to use the rust. Since then, we have enlisted the help of the British Embassy in Buenos Aires, and they have been exceptionally helpful. China has been awaiting this permission before release, but they have still undertaken the experimental trial on Neiling Ding, since they do not see this as actually releasing the rust. Although we anticipated that the permission issue would be resolved by now, it is still on going.

Federico Rosales, our contact in the British Embassy, has found out that we must approach the Provincial authorities in Misiones, where the rust was collected, for permission; *vis* Sr. Ministro de Ecología, Recursos Naturales Renovables y Turismo, Gobierno de la Provincia de Misiones. Fortunately, in 2004 Misiones passed a Provincial Law concerning the control of the exploitation of biodiversity, under the CDB, and it is to this that we must conform. Federico put together in Spanish, an official request in August 2005, with high hope of success, but unfortunately we have just found out that this is not going to be a simple procedure (see 2. below).

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Release on Neiling Ding Island

A short time after the release of the rust on Neiling ding, we were informed that a new official order has been issued by Guangdong Provincial Forestry Administration Bureau that all project activities should cease on the island, and the rust infected plots must be destroyed. The reasons given are that the Island is listed as a National Nature Conservation Park (preventing the release of new living things on the island) and it is a Military Forbidden Zone (all individuals must have special permission to enter). These statements beg a number of obvious questions, for example, why such issues had not come to light earlier.

Although the following events are outside this reporting period, I will include them here, rather than leave these developments in an unresolved state. To their credit, our project collaborators quickly resolved this critical situation. A new island was found on which to release the rust, Jiu-Zhou Island, about 20km from Neiling ding. The release site on Neiling ding was destroyed (no information has been provided as to how this was carried-out) and the rust transferred and released on Jui-Zhou on 21st October 2005. Photos of the release site and procedure have been provided together with weather data. We emphasised the importance of recording weed density within the new release plots. It would be fascinating to know, one day, if the rust was truly eradicated from Neiling ding.

Permission from Argentina

Again, although the most recent developments concerning the obtaining of permission from Argentina to release the rust in China are out side of this reporting period, I will still include them here. Overall, we are clearly coming up against a developing framework within Argentina's biodiversity strategy. Although not originally part of our remit, this Darwin Initiative project can be considered to be helping development this framework, by trying to use it. We need to take this further, by enlisting the direct help of DEFRA, through the Darwin Initiative Secretariat. The situation is as follows:

We were informed only this month that the agreement with Misiones has to be through an Argentine based research organisation. CABI does not have an office in Argentina, and CABI personnel collected the pathotype of the rust while undertaking surveys for another project not connected with the Darwin Initiative. It should be noted that a permit to collect natural enemies on native plants in Argentina, that are weeds elsewhere, had been obtained. This week I spoke to Federico and he has advised that someone appropriate from DEFRA should provide details about the Darwin Initiative and the Mikania project to Mal Green (Second Political Officer) of the British Embassy (through Federico). DEFRA need to request that the British Embassy act as the link between CABI Bioscience and the Misiones authorities (eg liaising and providing translations). Someone from CABI or DEFRA will probably need to go out and sign the agreement. He thinks that this may circumvent the need for a collaborating Argentine research organisation to be included in the agreement. The most critical issue here is time, we need to get this permission as soon as possible, if we are not to end up with the rust naturally reaching the mainland and hence, in effect, it can be considered released without official permission from Argentina.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

We are in the process of supplying the necessary information to the Darwin Secretariat concerning DEFRA's contact with the British Embassy in Buenos Aires. If successful there should be no change to

the original agreement.	
Discussed with the DI Secretariat:	no/yes, in..... (month/yr)
Changes to the project schedule/workplan:	no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

If it is necessary for someone from CABI to visit Misiones, Argentina, we may need to adjust the original budget, as we assume there will be not additional funding available.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**