

Position Paper on Invasive Alien Species

Since certain easily spreading plant and animal species alien to the European territory seriously threaten ecosystems, economy or human health, calls for a more coordinated and preventive pan-European approach to EU biodiversity protection can be heard. Based on these calls, the regulation on prevention and management of such species (COM/2013/0620 final - 2013/0307 (COD)) was adopted by the Member States and European Parliament in April 2014.

Fur Europe supports adoption of legislation to protect European environment. However, the proposed regulation imposes ban on a group of species recognized as invasive alien species of EU concern, banning their import or handling within the EU. Two of our fur animal species – Finnraccoon and American mink – were likely to get on the list of banned species what would cause a severe harm to the fur sector. The American mink skins constitute up to 92% of all skins produced.

American mink has spread in European nature primarily after massive releases of farm animals by activists. It successfully established its viable population in the nature of many European countries causing damage by predating on birds, fish and competing with other species, predominantly European mink.

The fur farmers in Europe have done a lot to secure their farms in the past year. We have witnessed that the farm security measures such as fencing are preventing legal releases from the farms. Finally, an independent scientific study and day-to-day practice have proven that the farmed mink has become a domesticated animal, significantly differing both physiologically and ethologically from its wild counterpart. Therefore, a huge majority of released mink are not capable to survive in nature.

Finally, when it comes to socio-economic consideration, a ban on most of the invasive alien species would bring more benefits than costs since the damages are often vast or the species is substitutable by another “safer” species. This is however not the case of fur sector; also the Impact Assessment conducted by European Commission has recognized this fact and called for taking the socio-economic impacts into consideration. In season 2011-2012 the sales of two big European auction houses were more than 2 billion €, and the fur sector in Europe was creating 60,000 full time jobs and many more part-time or seasonal jobs. At the same time, the damages or management costs are not as high as for many other species and a lot of data on American mink damage is not clear; for example, the decline of European mink population is a complex issue and is not caused only by American mink but is also a consequence of processes such as climate or environment changes.

Fur Europe strongly supports securing the fur farms in Europe e.g. with fences as it is by regulations in e.g. Spain and Denmark.