

# Stakeholders in Invasive Species Regulation: The Case of Noxious Weeds

Many non-native insect, disease and weed pests of food, fiber and nursery crops pose significant threats to the U.S. environment, agricultural production and trade. Noxious weed regulations, based on the authority granted by the Plant Protection and the Federal Seed Act, prohibit or restrict the spread of invasive and harmful weeds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture publishes a list of noxious weeds and weed seeds, which are prohibited or restricted in international and interstate commerce. In addition, each state's Department of Agriculture maintains lists of noxious weeds and weed seeds to counter threats to respective ecological, environmental and agricultural interests.

The definition, size and composition of noxious weed and weed-seed lists significantly vary by state including cases where such lists are advisory rather than regulatory in nature. For example, California's noxious weed list is compiled on the basis of potential injury to state's interests (e.g., high, moderate, and limited) and empowers state administrators to eradicate or control invasive weeds. However, Georgia's noxious weed list, established by a consortium of state agencies and interest groups, does not necessarily embody legal authority to counter such threats. In the case of weed seeds for instance, only 25 of 49 weeds on Washington's list appear in that of its neighbor, Oregon.

In this study, funded by the *Program of Research on the Economics of Invasive Species Management*, ERS, USDA, we consider the role of stakeholders' interest and input in explaining cross-state differences in noxious weed regulations. In particular, we identify trade-offs which consumers, environmentalists, and seed and commodity producers face in their decision to support or oppose noxious weed regulations. We then examine how state-level regulations and cross-state regulatory congruence are affected by stakeholder inputs as well as by scientific rationales underlying such regulations. Finally, we investigate the effects of regulatory congruence on interstate seed, nursery, and horticulture trade.

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