

Invasive species transform ecosystems by using excessive quantities of resources



Beneficiaries of control alien plants

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are non-native to an ecosystem, and that may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health. Invasive alien species particularly impact adversely upon biodiversity, including the decline or elimination of native species—through competition, predation, or transmission of pathogens—and the disruption of local ecosystems and ecosystem functions. They were introduced and spread outside their natural habitats, have affected native biodiversity in almost every ecosystem type on earth and are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. The problem continues to increase at great socio-economic, health and ecological cost around the world.

Invasive alien species exacerbate poverty and threaten development through their impact on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and natural systems which are an important basis of peoples' livelihoods in developing countries. This damage is aggravated by climate change, pollution, habitat loss and human-induced disturbance. Invasive species can change the functions of ecosystems. For example, invasive plants can alter the fire regime,

nutrient cycling, and hydrology in native ecosystems. Invasive species that are closely related to rare native species have the potential to hybridise with other native species. Invasive species cause competition for native species and because of this, 400 of the 958 are endangered species. Invasive species can impact on outdoor recreation, such as fishing, hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, and water-based activities.

They can damage a wide array of environmental services that are important to recreation, including, but not limited to, water quality and quantity, plant and animal diversity, and species abundance. Invasive species may displace local native species, therefore, apart from their economic implications; alien invasions may result in extensive changes in the structure, composition and global distribution of the biota of the sites of introduction, ultimately leading to the homogenisation of the world's fauna and flora and the loss of biodiversity. Nevertheless, it is difficult to unequivocally attribute extinctions to a species invasion, and the few scientific studies that have done so have been with animal taxa. In assessing the impact of invasive species on biodiversity, the actual evidence (either ecological or economic), in relation to the potential risk must be considered.

Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has developed strategic efforts through the LandCare Programme, by funding LandCare projects with million rands to procure chemicals and equipment to control these invasive species and to establish for good veld management practices.

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Conditions before removal of alien plants



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