

Introduction

The prevention and minimization of the impact of invasive alien species has become a priority on the agenda of the international community because of their negative impact on biodiversity, economy and public health. This has led in recent years to the development of tools (legal, technical, etc.) and programmes. It has become clear that the scale of the problem requires an interdisciplinary approach, the planning of long-term actions (strategic perspective), and urgency.

Biological invasions are a global problem whose local impact can be of great magnitude. Effective responses are needed, cooperation and coordination among countries and/or different sectors of society are a must. In this frame, scientific research is fundamental to improving knowledge on invasive alien species and developing new methodologies to fight them.

Big steps to improve the understanding of biological invasions have been taken in recent years thanks to the increase of basic research in this field. However, in spite of the successes obtained and enlightening information gained on 'the biological invasions phenomenon', there are still many gaps to be filled. The implementation of models, the improvement of mitigation methods (more effective and more environmentally friendly) and prevention techniques (e.g. risk analysis) are a priority. However given that invasive alien species represent a global threat, it is necessary to make the best use of the current information available.

It is absolutely necessary to optimise the efforts in scientific research, establishing mechanisms to develop the exchange of information on invasive alien species, keeping in mind that in the case of biological invasions solutions to a problem may be found in other parts of the world.

In this spirit and with the objective, among others, of combining and sharing the experiences

on biological invasions carried out in Spain, the GEI (Grupo Especies Invasoras) organised the First National Conference on Invasive Alien Species in 2003. More than 150 people from different parts of the peninsula and from other countries belonging to different institutions (universities, public administration, NGOs) responded to this 'call for action' and participated in the conference.

The present publication, which contains some of the contributions of the First National Conference on Invasive Alien species, aims to increase global knowledge on invasive alien species.

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Laura Capdevila-Argüelles & Bernardo Zilletti
G.E.I. – Grupo Especies Invasoras
c/ Moisés de León N. 22 Bajo
24006 León
Spain
E-mail: geiinvasoras@usuarios.retecal.es

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