

Explanatory Notes for Fireblight Buffer Zone Status

■ Plant Health and the Single Market

Within the Single Market, plant health checks are focused on the place of production. There are no border checks for plants and plant products travelling between EU Member States (http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/index_en.htm), although spot checks may take place anywhere in the trade chain. A limited range of material which hosts the most serious 'quarantine' pests and diseases requires a plant passport to facilitate its movement. Where required, a passport is needed both for movements within and between Member States, and additional requirements apply for movements into and within certain 'protected zones'.

■ Protected zones

Certain areas of the EU that are free from plant pests usually established elsewhere in the EU have been designated 'protected zones'. Plants and plant produce that are hosts of these pests must reach higher plant health standards before entering these zones.

■ Fireblight protected zone

A protected zone for fireblight disease has been established which covers parts of the UK (Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands) and several other Member States. The geographical extent of the zones is updated regularly to take account of changes in distribution of the disease. The relevant EU regulation is Commission Decision 690/2008 (as amended). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32008R0690>.

Before fireblight host plants can be issued with valid plant passports for entry into the fireblight protected zone they must have been produced or maintained for at least 2 complete growing seasons, so April in Year 1 to October Year 2 (19 months) in a fireblight 'buffer zone'.

■ Plants (genera) included

Fireblight hosts include plants and parts of plants (other than fruit and seeds) and live pollen for pollination of the following genera: *Amelanchier*, *Chaenomeles*, *Cotoneaster*, *Crataegus*, *Cydonia*, *Eriobotrya*, *Malus*, *Mespilus*, *Photinia davidiana*, *Pyracantha*, *Pyrus* and *Sorbus*. Nurseries which trade within the fireblight protected zone may wish to apply for buffer zone status so that they can include fireblight susceptible plants in that trade.

■ Applications

Application for 'buffer zone' status should be made on the attached form, with a surveyed map showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zone in red. The buffer zone must cover at least 50 km², including all land within 1 km of the nursery boundary. Spot checks will be made of fireblight host plants within the buffer zone. You should consider carefully the boundaries of the buffer zone which you are proposing, bearing in mind not only the distribution of fireblight host plants within the buffer zone, but also the degree of co-operation which you are likely to receive from land owners and occupiers in keeping the buffer zone and surrounding area free from fireblight.

■ **Inspections and findings of fireblight**

All host plants within the nursery and within 250 metres of the nursery boundary will be inspected for symptoms of fireblight at least twice during the growing season and there will also be an inspection of host plants within 500m of the nursery. Any confirmed finding of fireblight within the buffer zone will invalidate the designation of the buffer zone. Authorisation to issue passports for the protected zone will only be given after another whole season's inspections have shown the buffer zone to be free from fireblight again.

■ **Charges for 'Fireblight Free Buffer Zone' inspections**

There will be a time based charge covering the cost of inspections (this includes laboratory diagnosis) which is required to establish fireblight buffer zone status. Applications can be submitted, and initial advice obtained, including an estimate of the cost, without any commitment to pursuing the application and incurring charges.

Fireblight Buffer Zone Status is granted annually, subject to these inspections, and you should complete the PHAR 3 application form each season.