

## ***Ambrosia artemisiifolia* – a quick reaction to an invasion of Switzerland**

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Common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia* L.), a species from North America, is now an invasive species in several European regions such as the Balkan states and Hungary, the Po Valley in Italy and the Rhône-Alpes region in France. Common ragweed was presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> EWRS Symposium in Budapest as a new and very problematic weed in Hungary. It was predicted that this weed will cause in the near future big problems for agriculture in other European countries. In infested European regions people begin today to suffer from allergies as the quantity of pollen in the air increases. This increase of pollen is caused by an enormous and fast propagation of ragweed in infested areas and a rapid distribution to non-infested areas.

Results of a 2005 survey on presence of ragweed in Switzerland were confirmed in 2006. *A. artemisiifolia* is present mostly as single plant stands in the entire settlement area of the country, introduced basically by bird seed grains.

In the western part of Switzerland, it has also been introduced by agricultural machines, such as harvesters, from France and is now present in several agricultural fields and along road sides. With soil movements, traffic and transport of goods, ragweed seeds are distributed to all zones of human activities. An information campaign of the research station Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil (ACW) initiated manifold activities against ragweed in Switzerland. Highly motivated people control their gardens and help to curb the invasion.

Federal authorities have declared *A. artemisiifolia* as an undesirable plant. In 2005 the Federal Department for Economic Affairs adapted the ordinance on animal feedstuff with the restriction that all type of feedstuff put into circulation must be free from ragweed seeds. 2006 the Federal Council amended the ordinance on plant protection and declared *A. artemisiifolia* subject to official control. Agricultural advisory services are now forced to control every focus of contamination in the fields because of the invasive behaviour of common ragweed.

Since 2003, Agroscope ACW has been performing efficacy trials with herbicides registered in Switzerland. These results were published in agricultural journals. We have also carried out mowing trials since 2004. We assessed plant regeneration and seed production after various dates of cutting. First observations show that a unique cut in the first half of September can break the plant life cycle and prevent seed production. Next years trials aim to prevent both, pollen and seed production.

For the general public we recommend eradicating common ragweed by hand wearing gloves – and a mask and as soon as it flowers – and putting it immediately into the garbage bag, if up to 20 plants are found. A focus of > 20 plants should be eradicated immediately by specialists. Composting of ragweed is not allowed. The sites must be controlled in the following year.

The poster shows the actual distribution of *A. artemisiifolia* in Switzerland. It also demonstrates legal aspects and the concerted action in the country as well as the control methods given to the public.