

Future-proofing forestry: a coordinated response to the conifer biosecurity threat *Lecanosticta acicola*



An international partnership of scientists from New Zealand, Spain and the USA is working to protect forests from emerging biosecurity threats. The focus is on *Lecanosticta acicola*, the cause of brown spot needle blight (BSNB), a pine disease that is having significant impacts on forests in Europe and Southeast USA and poses a serious biosecurity risk to New Zealand and other regions.

A series of international workshops will support collaboration and knowledge sharing. The first will be held in Basque Country, Spain (Oct 2026), followed by workshops in USA and New Zealand (2027, dates TBC).

These events will unite scientists and forest industry representatives to align priorities to develop a coordinated research to address *Lecanosticta acicola* and other emerging threats.

These workshops aim to bring together global expertise to explore rapid detection tools and potential treatment options. The long-term goal is to increase global cooperation in research on BSNB and strengthen forest health and resilience. The presentations will be available for viewing via Teams or recording.

Symposium details:

Thursday 8th October 2026
(Central European Summer Time)

Understanding BSNB:
From Epidemiology to Management

**Join Meeting via session links in
programme**

Key Contacts

Dr. Rebecca McDougal,
Project Lead & Forest Pathologist,
Bioeconomy Science Institute, New Zealand.
rebecca.mcdougal@scionresearch.com

Dr. Eugenia Iturritxa
Forest Pathologist, Neiker-BRTA, Spain.
eiturritxa@neiker.eus

Dr. Caterina Villari
Assoc. Prof. Forest Pathology, University of Georgia,
USA. cvillari@uga.edu

Programme Thursday 8th October : Understanding BSNB - From Epidemiology to Management

All times are in Central European Summer Time (CEST)

08:00-08:30 Opening welcome (Chair: Eugenia Iturritya)

Join Meeting: [Opening & Session 1 Teams Link](#)

Speaker	Organization, Country	Title
Eugenia Iturritya	Neiker-BRTA, Spain	Welcome to Neiker & Workshop, Re-cap on field trip observations, housekeeping
Rebecca McDougal	Bioeconomy Science Institute, New Zealand	Welcome, workshop objectives and overview

08:30-10:15 Session 1: Global Perspectives and Impacts (Chair: Caterina Villari)

Eugenia Iturritya	Neiker-BRTA, Spain	Forest Health Under Pressure: Forest owners’ perceptions and preferences for managing Pine Needle Blight
Oskar Azkarate Zabalo	BaskEgur, Spain	Adapting to Forest Health Challenges: The Industry Response
Colton Meinecke	University of Georgia, USA	BSNB on loblolly pine in the Southeast USA
Lee Robertson	Institute of Forest Sciences (ICIFOR-INIA-CSIC), Spain	Forest health under pressure: The nematode edition
Elizabeth Heeg	CEO, New Zealand Forest Owners Association	Forest Shield Programme and NZ industry preparedness

10:15-10:45 Morning tea break

10:45-13:00 Session 2: Detection, Diagnostics and Surveillance (Chair: Nebai Mesanza)

Join Meeting: [Session 2 Teams Link](#)

Irene Barnes	Forestry & Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), South Africa	Pine needle diseases and biosecurity risks: lessons learnt <i>from Lecanosticta pharomachri</i> in Colombia
Katherine Tubby	Forest Research, UK	<i>Lecanosticta</i> surveillance, and potential global distribution under climate change
Miloň Dvořák	Mendel University, Czech Republic	How not to detect <i>Lecanosticta</i> and <i>Dothistroma</i> conidia in the air
Werna Wahlman	Natural Resources Institute (LUKE), Finland	Recent <i>Lecanosticta</i> detection and eradication experience in Finland (online)
Miloš Trifković	Mendel University, Czech Republic	The virome of <i>Lecanosticta</i> spp.
Lee Robertson	Institute of Forest Sciences (ICIFOR-INIA-CSIC), Spain	<i>Lecanosticta acicola</i> : A changing regulatory landscape

13:00-13:45 Lunch break

13:45-15:25 Session 3: Impacts, Epidemiology and Management (Chair: Colton Meinecke)

Join Meeting: [Session 3 Teams Link](#)

Emily McLay	Bioeconomy Science Institute, New Zealand	Why <i>Lecanosticta</i> matters for New Zealand forests
Gloria Pinto	University of Aveiro, Portugal	From misleading field symptoms to <i>Lecanosticta acicola</i> : Exploring host and pathogen responses (online)
Jenny Aitken	JA Biotech, New Zealand	Pre-emptive biosecurity project with New Zealand <i>Pinus radiata</i> in the Basque Country
Caterina Villari	University of Georgia, USA	Efforts to characterize, evaluate, and manage BSNB in the Southeast USA
Alejandro Cantero	Hazi, Spain	Disease detection by remote sensing in Spanish Forests

15:25-15:55 Afternoon tea break

15:55-17:40 Session 4: Biosecurity Preparedness and Future Directions (Chair: Emily McLay)

Join Meeting: [Session 4 & Closing Teams Link](#)

Steve Gatenby	Kaingaroa Tipu, New Zealand	<i>Dothistroma</i> control in New Zealand: could it work for <i>Lecanosticta</i> ?
Angus Carnegie	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Fisheries & Forestry, Australia	Endeavours to prove Australia is free from <i>Lecanosticta acicola</i>
Nebai Mesanza	Neiker-BRTA, Spain	Key factors driving the spread of <i>Lecanosticta acicola</i> in northern Spain
Julio Javier Diez Casero	University of Valladolid, Spain	Global Change and Forest Health: RNA-Based Strategies for the Control of Emerging Forest Diseases
Rebecca McDougal	Bioeconomy Science Institute, New Zealand	<i>Lecanosticta acicola</i> readiness for New Zealand

17:40-17:55 Closing session (Chair: Rebecca McDougal)