

Septoria centrophylli infected Australian accessions of saffron thistle tested. Small necrotic lesions were first observed at 8 days after inoculation and developed into necrotic lesions by 13 days after inoculation. All safflower cultivars inoculated with *S. centrophylli* also developed large necrotic lesions. The finding that safflower is also a host for the two pathogens isolated from *C. lanatus* in Greece raises concerns about the suitability of these pathogens for biological control of saffron thistle in Australia. Although the safflower industry is shrinking in Australia, farmers are still contracted to grow this crop for the Japanese market because of the high quality oil produced. It is likely that a conflict of interest would emerge with this industry should this biological control program be pursued.

Assessing the risks associated with the release of a flowerbud weevil, *Anthonomus santacruzi*, against the invasive tree *Solanum mauritianum* in South Africa

T. Olckers

ARC–Plant Protection Research Institute, Private Bag X6006, Hilton 3245, South Africa

Biological control of *Solanum mauritianum* Scopoli, a major environmental weed in the high-rainfall regions of South Africa, is dependent on the establishment of agents that can reduce fruiting and limit seed dispersal. The flowerbud weevil, *Anthonomus santacruzi* Hustache, is a very promising fruit-reducing agent, despite ambiguous results obtained during host-specificity evaluation in quarantine. Adult no-choice tests showed that although feeding is confined to *Solanum* species, normal feeding and survival occurred on the foliage (devoid of floral material) of cultivated eggplant (aubergine), potato and several native South African *Solanum* species. During paired choice tests involving floral bouquets in 10-litre containers, *A. santacruzi* oviposited in the flowerbuds of 12 of the 17 test species, including potato and eggplant, although significantly more larvae were recovered on *S. mauritianum* than on eight species. Larvae survived to adulthood on all 12 species, with survival significantly lower on only four species than on *S. mauritianum*. However, during multichoice tests, involving potted plants in a large walk-in cage, *A. santacruzi* consistently displayed significant feeding and oviposition preferences for *S. mauritianum* over all of the 14 *Solanum* species tested. Analyses of the risk of attack on non-target *Solanum* plants suggested that, with the possible exception of two native species, none are likely to be extensively utilized as hosts in the field. Also, host records and field surveys in South America have suggested that *A. santacruzi* has a very narrow host range and that the ambiguous laboratory results are further examples of artificially expanded host ranges. These and other considerations suggest that *A. santacruzi* should be considered for release against *S. mauritianum* in South Africa and an application for permission to release the weevil was submitted in 2002.