

The design of a consciousness-raising campaign against an invasive species in Uruguay grasslands— the case of *eragrostis plana* nees

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Introduction It was believed that until 2003 the occurrence of *Eragrostis plana* Nees in the Eastern Republic of Uruguay was only in the border area with Brazil (Longinotti 1994) . However , after several trips by Plan Agropecuario Institute and the faculty technician team , they were able to prove its presence not only on the border but practically on all the national roads (Instituto Plan Agropecuario and Facultad de Agronomía 2006) . Despite the seriousness of the situation , there is no coordinated campaign to make the productive sector aware of the emerging problem at a national level . Due to the present situation and its increasing progression , it is imperative to launch an active campaign which will clearly define the situation for the farmers . Its implementation is justified as the presence of the weed in the detected levels constitutes a considerable risk .

It is also important for the export chains because they sustain their competitiveness in the existence of a unique and privileged natural resource that permits generating differentiated products with national and ecological certifications . Thus , the aim of this work is to design a campaign to make people aware and allow the productive sector to evaluate the real dimension of the invasiveness and to facilitate proposals to achieve coordinated procedures at many levels .

Materials and methods Due to the complexity of the problem , mainly of a social and cultural nature , it seemed advisable that the central part of the work should be an attitude research-survey among farmers ; establishing the difference gap between their present perception and the knowledge needed to achieve their cooperation in reducing the spread of the weed . A descriptive analysis of the information and the correlation among some variables of interest were conducted .

Results and discussion Results show that the people interviewed are mainly from extensive farms . The spontaneous perception of the problem shows a vast unknown of the general problem . On the other hand , the results of the survey at the level of sensitivity indicate a strong willingness to cooperate , not only in the design of the campaign but also in the identification and control of the spots where the spread is of extreme importance .

Conclusions The work has provided enough information to show the convenience and necessity of implementing a campaign for the people to become aware of the situation . And at the same time it has proved that it is possible to achieve notorious changes in the actual dispositions of the farmers . The diffusion of information should be highlighted and performed either as an educational element or as a trigger for specific actions . A complementary strategy is the utilization of an innovative mechanism such as the national volunteers net which will help farmers understand and become involved in the problem .

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