



- **1st International Ragweed Conference**
September 10-13 2008, Budapest, Hungary
- **2nd International Symposium „Intractable Weeds and Plant Invaders“**
September 14-18 2008, Osijek, Croatia

Concerned scientists call for action on a European invasive weed - **Ragweed**

Over one hundred scientists from 24 countries gathered together for two international congresses in September 2008 to discuss a problem of national and international importance – the invasion of *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* L. in Europe. This weed, which is native to North America, has highly allergenic pollen which causes allergic rhinitis and severe asthma in over 20% of the population of affected areas. These health problems cause losses of work time and costs of medical visits and medication. Furthermore, projected climatic change will exacerbate the current situation and lead to more widespread health problems in the near future. In agriculture, the plant is also a significant agricultural pest, causing yield loss in many crops.

Ambrosia artemisiifolia is spreading actively throughout Europe at the present time. We recognize two situations - that of presently heavily infested areas, such as Hungary and Croatia, the hosts of the international congresses, and that of areas threatened with invasions, which it may still be possible to contain.

Our purpose is to inform responsible agencies of the major costs and dangers of this invasive plant and to urge strongly the adoption of measures to prevent further spread and to control current infestations. Management measures are urgently requested, adapted to different types of invaded habitats – agricultural fields, grazing areas, field margins, construction sites, road and railway corridors, and waste areas – all of which are area associated with human activities. There are also other areas of natural regular disturbance such as river and stream beds and highly eroded slopes.

Several control measures already exist and new ones are under development. Adequate management of this weed will require the concentrated and continued development and application of these measures over a long period. They will have to be adapted to each situation based on informed advice from local scientific experts. This must be coupled with detailed monitoring of the weed presence.

We urge all governments to take this issue seriously and respond with appropriate action in their areas of responsibility.