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## AUDIT OF PROTECTION AGAINST RAGWEED CLOSED

Summary for the Press

on the audit of protection against ragweed (17090)

**The State Audit Office of Hungary has finished the audit of the system of protection against ragweed concerning the period between 2013–2015. The SAO has concluded that the framework system and the relevant control environment have been established, and measures taken in the course of the protection have supported but have not ensured the implementation of long term objectives. The pollen concentration of ragweed and the health risk caused by biological allergens have not been reduced, the daily average concentration of pollen in the country exceeded the target value every year. The volume of detection creating the conditions for targeted protection and that of the protection itself have been reduced in the audited period. The audit of the SAO has found that no correlation could be demonstrated between the efforts taken for the protection against ragweed and changes in the pollen concentration of ragweed.**

Widespread dissemination of ragweed has several negative effects in Hungary. In agricultural areas, ragweed results in the loss of crops, while the high pollen level of ragweed causes health problems and generates significant health care expenditure. In 2013, almost 2.5 million people suffered from allergic diseases, and ragweed pollen with an extremely high level of allergic potential ranked first among domestic allergens. Despite the strong efforts taken by the society in terms of protection against ragweed, the pollen concentration of ragweed has not decreased in Hungary.

Protection against ragweed is mainly the land user's statutory obligation, which is audited and sanctioned by the budgetary institutions being part of the system of protection. Authorities acting at first instance perform the detection of areas covered by ragweed, on-site audits, the ordering of protection of general interest as well as the imposition of plant protection fees. Other budgetary institutions also play a role in the system of protection. The minister of agriculture is responsible for the management of the professional agricultural activities of government offices, and exercises auditing powers related to lawfulness and professionalism. The audit of the SAO aimed at concluding whether the system of protection against ragweed functioned appropriately between 2013 and 2015, whether authorities participating in the detection, sanctioning and in the protection of general interest performed their related tasks properly, and whether measures taken in relation to the protection against ragweed promoted the implementation of such long term objectives.

The audit of the SAO has concluded that even though a control environment has been established, strategy papers and related action plans have not created the conditions necessary for the performance evaluation of protection against ragweed. The Ministry of Agriculture performed its tasks related to professional coordination, management, audit and reporting appropriately; however, it did not have complete information on the amount expenditure spent for protection or the size of infected areas.

The establishment, operation and development of IT systems related to the protection have taken place, and with the national Ragweed Pollen Alert System, determination of the territorial distribution of ragweed pollen concentration has become more reliable. However, low number of local governments availed themselves of the possibilities provided by the Municipality Ragweed Reporting System.

The development of the organisational framework of protection against ragweed has taken place; however, the performance of tasks has not been efficient. The size of the area affected by the detection, the area affected by the procedure which may be launched in accordance with the records made as a result of the detection, the size of the area affected by the protection of general interest, as well as the number of days spent by government offices for the audit have all shown a decreasing trend. The Institute of Geodesy Cartography and Remote Sensing did not perform remote sensing ragweed detection between 2013 and 2014, and in 2015, it only performed such activity on one part of the country's territory; therefore, the ragweed load map has not been updated. Government offices and notaries participating in the system of protection of public interest did not perform their work properly. They have not provided the appropriation for government offices in the period of protection against ragweed; therefore, it has not been used appropriately.

The State Audit Office of Hungary has drawn up proposals aiming at the correction of deficiencies for the heads of relevant organisations. In the SAO's opinion, it is appropriate to review and, if necessary, modify the objectives, system and methods of protection on the basis of experiences and study results in order to ensure an efficient contribution of protecting measures to the reduction of ragweed pollen concentration.