



20 December 2013

(13-7021)

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: Spanish

BAN ON THE USE OF METHYL BROMIDE AS A FUMIGANT FOR AGRICULTURAL USE

COMMUNICATION FROM COSTA RICA

The following communication, dated 19 December 2013, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Costa Rica.

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1. Costa Rica is the first Central American country to end the use of methyl bromide, a soil disinfectant chemical designed to eliminate weeds and pests ahead of growing watermelon, strawberries, flowers, tobacco and melon.
 2. From this year on, importation of this substance is banned in the country, which has declared itself free of this chemical, regarded as one of the main destroyers of the ozone layer, whose role is to protect us from the rays of the sun.
 3. This measure falls within the scope of the Montreal Protocol, an international treaty aimed at protecting the ozone layer and at reducing the use of ozone depleting substances.
 4. According to the Ozone Technical Office, the ban is possible because agriculture offers other solutions, such as the use of microorganisms and the implementation of biological controls, to combat diseases affecting various crops, most recently melon crops, as of this year. Organic weed and pest control is both positive and sustainable.
 5. Instead of methyl bromide, farmers use techniques including the rays of the sun to increase temperature, crop rotation, "greener" herbicides and microorganisms to maintain soil health and combat weeds and other pests.
 6. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), this is a success in keeping with the pioneering spirit of Costa Rica, which has already seen other environment-related achievements.
 7. We will now be fully entitled to demand market niches so that Costa Rican products enjoy the privileged treatment ensuing from the reduction of chemicals harmful to human health and the environment.

Other measures

8. The elimination of methyl bromide was one of the measures adopted by the country pursuant to the Montreal Protocol, an agreement of universal scope aimed at protecting the ozone layer, which was ratified by Costa Rica in 1991.
 9. According to the Directorate of Environmental Quality Management in the Ministry of the Environment and Energy (DIGECA-MINAE), another measure is targeted at reducing by 82% the importation of HCFC 141, a substance used in coolants that is also destructive of ozone.
 10. Efforts are simultaneously being made to gradually phase out HFCs, which are a contributory factor in global warming and hence climate change.
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