

**ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL ORGANIZATION
FOR PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH (OIRSA) RELATING TO THE
WTO AGREEMENT ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY
AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES,
FEBRUARY - MAY 2023

The following communication, received on 31 May 2023, is being circulated at the request of OIRSA.

**1 TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES RELATING
TO AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND TRADE**

1.1. As part of measures to prevent the entry of *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *ubense* tropical race 4 (Foc TR4) into the OIRSA region, a training workshop was held in Honduras on precision agriculture in banana crops using satellite images as a tool to provide early warning and detection of potential cases of Foc TR4; the workshop was held with technical support from the Chinese Taipei International Cooperation and Development Fund, the National Agriculture and Food Health and Safety Service of Honduras (SENASA), and OIRSA. In the Dominican Republic, with support from the country's Ministry of Agriculture, producers were trained in farm management in the event of suspected cases of the pathogen. In Belize, with support from the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), the Chinese Taipei International Cooperation and Development Fund and OIRSA, 20 small banana producers were trained in strategies to prevent Foc TR4 in their crops. In Honduras and Guatemala, with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), SENASA, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food of Guatemala (MAGA), the Chinese Taipei International Cooperation and Development Fund and OIRSA, a forum and simulation exercise were held on Foc TR4 prevention and containment in Musaceae crops; more than 120 people took part from sectors including government, production, academia, and research. With support from Nicaragua's Institute for Agricultural Protection and Health (IPSA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and OIRSA, a simulation exercise was organized for wilt in Musaceae caused by Foc TR4; more than 15 Latin American countries took part and the country's capacity to contain a possible outbreak was assessed.

1.2. In conjunction with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of El Salvador (MAG) a virtual phytosanitary day was organized on the detection and eradication of outbreaks of fruit flies in fruit fly-pest free areas. Additionally a simulation exercise was held of the plan to be followed in the event of an outbreak of fruit flies of genus *Bactrocera* spp; delegates from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama participated.

1.3. Training was provided in the Australian fumigation standard for staff at the International Quarantine Treatment Service (SITC) of OIRSA, the Agricultural Protection Service of OIRSA (SEPA) for Honduras and Guatemala, and the SITC of Costa Rica. In Honduras and Guatemala, SITC staff were trained in quarantine treatments, including fumigation, spraying, sprinkling and handling of international waste. In Nicaragua staff were trained in the use of equipment to measure the concentrations of substances for the application of quarantine treatments.

1.4. In order to assist customs in El Salvador and Honduras in preventing the entry of pests or diseases of agricultural concern, three dog-handler pairs were trained to detect suspect material of plant or animal origin. Trainers of dog-handler pairs were also trained in order to bolster dog-handling units in countries across the OIRSA region.

1.5. The course on quantitative exposure assessment models for pesticides in food was held in Costa Rica, as was a Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) workshop on food safety crisis preparedness, which provided specialized advanced training in food safety crisis preparedness and management.

1.6. Where food security and food safety are concerned, technical support was provided to SENASA of Honduras in the use of the Global Environment Monitoring System/Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Programme (GEMS/Food) platform. A quantitative risk assessment workshop was also held using a Monte Carlo simulation to assess exposure to the pesticide Chlorpyrifos in food, inorganic arsenic in rice and aflatoxins in maize.

1.7. In view of the regional emergency caused by outbreaks of avian influenza, a refresher day on the status of the disease was held in the Dominican Republic. Environmental technicians and technicians from the ministries of agriculture and livestock of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and the Dominican Republic were trained in measures to prevent and control avian influenza (AI) and the risk of it being introduced at border crossings and blind spots. In Guatemala a training seminar was organized for outreach workers and veterinarians in government and private practice on surveillance of avian influenza.

1.8. Workshops were delivered on the importance of the multi-sectoral "One Health" approach in prioritizing zoonotic diseases, including avian influenza.

1.9. A practical and theoretical training course on strategy for progressive control of bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis was organized in El Salvador for technical staff in the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of El Salvador. March 2023.

1.10. In conjunction with the National Network for Surveillance and Control of Antimicrobial Resistance in Guatemala (RAM Network), training was organized on alternative treatments for multi drug-resistant bacteria and strategies to combat antimicrobial resistance, the latter with support from the Pan American Center for Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Veterinary Public Health (PANAFTOSA/VPH).

1.11. Technical assistance was provided to the MAG of El Salvador in revising its epidemiological surveillance plan for bee health.

2 SUPPORT FOR THE HARMONIZATION AND EQUIVALENCE PROCESS

2.1. A regional risk analysis was drawn up on the risk that quarantine or cross-border pests and diseases may be introduced into countries in the OIRSA region through new or used tyres or used clothing.

2.2. The second phase of the regional project for the accreditation of laboratory diagnostic tests for animal diseases (SDTF/PG/495) was concluded in seven countries in the region (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama); under the project 11 additional techniques were approved.

3 PREVENTION, CONTROL AND ERADICATION ACTIVITIES (PROGRAMMES OR CAMPAIGNS)

3.1. Four satellite monitoring points were set up at Musaceae farms in Guatemala with support from OIRSA, the Chinese Taipei International Cooperation and Development Fund and MAGA of Guatemala. This will help to strengthen surveillance in banana-producing areas of the country through an early warning system for Foc TR4.

3.2. Owing to the declaration of avian influenza in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama, extraordinary regional emergency funds were activated to implement measures to prevent, control

and eradicate low and high pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI and HPAI), strengthen the level 3 animal health laboratories of the OIRSA member countries, implement a regional communication campaign and support the formulation of national plans and a budget to respond to the emergency. As a follow-up to the emergency plans that the countries formulated, technical missions were conducted in the countries of the region.

4 STRENGTHENING NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO FACILITATE TRADE

4.1. OIRSA participated in the establishment of the technical committee monitoring the implementation of the Law on the protection of plantain and banana crops in Guatemala in order to prevent the introduction of Foc TR4 and other pests of Musaceae.

4.2. Support is being provided to the construction of holding corrals on the border at El Ceibo (Guatemala-Mexico), to check cattle for export to Mexico.

5 STRATEGIC ALLIANCES TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND TRADE

5.1. The letter of agreement for the implementation of the Regional Project to prevent and control *Fusarium* Tropical Race 4 in banana and plantain crops in Honduras was signed; it will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG)-SENASA, the Chinese Taipei International Cooperation and Development Fund and OIRSA. The aims of the project include strengthening the diagnosis of diseases in plants, for example by establishing field technology and building laboratories' technical capacities.

5.2. A working meeting took place between OIRSA officials and the Palm Growers Association (GREPALMA) of Guatemala to draw up strategies to prevent pests and diseases that affect palms and introduce a joint work plan.

5.3. The Progressive Pathway for Emergency Preparedness (PPEP) process continues in OIRSA member countries, in conjunction with FAO-OIRSA, in order to enable each country to assess its animal health emergency preparedness so that the priority and key areas as identified by each country can be worked on and managed.

5.4. The Agreement with Rafael Landívar University in Guatemala was reactivated; it makes it possible to strengthen research projects and to deliver diploma, postgraduate and master's degree courses in agricultural topics covering the nine countries in the OIRSA region.

5.5. The "One Health Commission" was established, comprising OIRSA, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Executive Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America (SECOMISCA) and the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development (CCAD), in order to strengthen intersectoral work on the human-animal interface of avian influenza.
