

**CLEAN STOCK PROGRAM FOR DRACAENA SPP INTENDED FOR EXPORT TO  
THE UNITED STATES MARKET**

Communication from Costa Rica

The following communication, received on 19 June 2007, is being distributed at the request of the delegation of Costa Rica.

1. The cultivation of ornamental plants in Costa Rica generates approximately \$30 million per year in exports to the United States market, which accounts for 56 per cent of the ornamental plant industry's total exports. Over the past three years, the production of this vegetative material has increased by 10 per cent, a trend which is expected to continue.
2. However, over the past ten years, access to the United States market for ornamental plants exceeding 18 inches (45 cm.) in size from Costa Rica has been rendered difficult for two specific reasons: (i) United States phytosanitary regulations restricting the entry of ornamental plants; (ii) the high rate of pest interception in exports of *Dracaena* propagative material from Costa Rica at the ports of entry into the United States.
3. In an attempt to resolve this problem, the Government of Costa Rica, with the support of the United States and in cooperation with the domestic export sector, implemented a pilot programme for the inspection and certification of *Dracaena* spp. ornamental plants exported to the United States, known as the Clean Stock Program.
4. In order to help with the implementation of this programme, a research project was developed with a view to studying the propagative material and the different environmental agents that impact the proliferation of pests. The project was launched in 2005 with the chief objective of developing ways of minimizing the phytosanitary risk of *Dracaenas* for export by changing a number of practices in the productive chain to make them entirely safe from the phytosanitary point of view. At the same time, the project seeks to generate technical information in support of the amendment of United States legislation on *Dracaenas* measuring more than 18 inches.
5. The project's activities can be divided into three components: (i) research: the objective is to identify the main pests associated with *Dracaenas* that account for the interceptions and to link them to the environmental and ecological conditions in order ultimately to come up with an integrated pest management system that will contribute to risk mitigation; (ii) traceability and inspection: the main objective here is to come up with phytosanitary agricultural practices that help to minimize the risk posed by the pests that have been identified and to develop a system of documentary traceability with respect to the shipments of *Dracaena* plants that permits both the backward and forward monitoring of the process; (iii) programme image and extension: the objective is to help manage the other

components by producing publications, organizing workshops, meeting with the different sectors involved, and developing and maintaining a programme web site ([www.dracaenas.cnp.go.cr](http://www.dracaenas.cnp.go.cr)).

6. One of the most prominent aspects of the project has been the setting up of a Steering Committee comprising actors from both the public and private sectors, with the official participation of the United States and contributions by international academic institutions. The programme is coordinated by the State Phytosanitary Service of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica (MAG), with the executive and management support of the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) and the National Production Council (CNP) as well as Purdue University. The Ministry of Foreign Trade of Costa Rica (COMEX) and the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) also participate actively, providing political and technical support respectively. The export industry is represented in each component of the project.

7. The planned duration of the research project is three years (2005-2008) for a total cost of US\$1,487,808.96 to be financed through funds provided by the Costa Rican Government which, in accordance with its State policies, created a support programme for the agricultural production sector in order to contribute to its productive, technological and entrepreneurial transformation, a prerequisite to improved competitiveness. It is hoped that these measures will enable Costa Rica to secure and maintain access to the United States market and to achieve a significant annual increase in its exports of this type of propagative material while improving its competitiveness *vis-à-vis* international markets.

8. The Government of Costa Rica feels that it is important to share this bilateral experience in the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, an approach that will provide scientific arguments for reviewing the quarantine legislation in force in the United States and developing mitigation measures to reduce the phytosanitary risk and promote international trade.

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