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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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AREAS FOUND TO BE FREE OF *STENOMA CATENIFER* (LEPIDOPTERA-OECOPHORIDAE) ON THE BASIS OF SURVEY WORK ON THIS PEST CONDUCTED IN PERUVIAN COASTAL AREAS WHERE AVOCADO (*PERSEA AMERICANA*) IS PRODUCED

Communication from Peru

The following communication, received on 9 January 2008, is being circulated at the request of Peru.

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1. Since 2000, Peru's National Agrarian Health Service (SENASA) has been implementing a survey of *Stenoma catenifer* (Lepidoptera: Oecophoridae), as part of a process to improve agrarian health conducted with the support of the Asociación Peruana de Productores de Palta "Hass" (Prohass) (Peruvian Association of Hass Avocado Producers). The objective is to confirm that the areas on the Peruvian coast where avocado (*Persea americana*) is produced are free from occurrence of this pest and to provide a technical/scientific basis for justification of the phytosanitary status of producing departments so as to secure access for avocados to the international markets where the pest in question has quarantine status.

2. To achieve this objective, a handbook of procedures for surveying *Stenoma catenifer* was prepared in 2000. At the same time, survey activities were initiated in avocado-producing areas that have export activity or export potential, in the departments of Ica, Lima and La Libertad, which were joined by Moquegua and Ancash in 2001, and by Arequipa in 2006.

3. The Handbook of Procedures was updated in 2006 to incorporate changes highlighting the work of sampling of the most susceptible varieties of fruits used for pollination purposes, on the basis of the degrees of infestation found in avocados grown in the Peruvian forest, the natural habitat for this pest. Samples of commercial varieties of the fruit, such as "Hass" and "Fuerte", nevertheless continued to be taken, albeit on a smaller scale.

4. By the end of 2007 a total of 41,073 hectares of avocado pear trees had been surveyed (on the understanding that the same areas are to be worked each year), and more than 216,000 fruits were sampled/observed during the period 2000-2007. Of those fruits, 139 were considered suspect, but after they were taken to specially designed recovery chambers, no specimen of *Stenoma catenifer* or any other Lepidoptera was detected. The damage to the suspect fruits was caused by machinery and birds.

5. As a result of this work, in 2006 Peruvian avocados gained access to the Chilean market, where *S. catenifer* is considered a quarantine pest. Consequently, SENASA is taking appropriate

action to secure access to other markets, such as those of the United States, Mexico and China, which also regulate this pest.

6. It should be noted that the areas of natural occurrence of the pest in Peru are tropical areas located in the departments of Junín and Pasco, which have an average temperature and average precipitation of around 30°C and 1,800 mm., respectively. For decades, thousands of tonnes of avocado have been transported from these areas to the Peruvian coast for marketing, but despite that fact the survey reports detected zero incidence of this pest in the areas covered by the survey. The inference that can be drawn is that, despite the length of time during which avocados have been delivered to the Peruvian coast, weather conditions have prevented the establishment of any population of *S. catenifer* in avocado fruit originating in the areas affected, since the average temperature on the coast is 18°C, with almost no precipitation.

7. SENASA thus provides an adequate level of phytosanitary protection for Peruvian avocado exports from the areas in which *S. catenifer* survey work has been conducted.

8. The volume of avocados inspected for export purposes over the last three years amounts to approximately 90,000 tonnes, and no incidence of *S. catenifer* has been detected. Similarly, SENASA has at no time been notified by the national phytosanitary protection agencies of the importing countries about the interception of this pest in destination markets.

Surveyed areas of Peru with no incidence of *Stenoma catenifer*