

**DECLARATION OF THE ENTIRE TERRITORY OF BELIZE AS FREE FROM
THE MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY (*CERATITIS CAPITATA*)**

Communication from Belize

The following communication, received on 20 April 2009, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Belize.

1. On 28 April 2007, Belize declared its territory as free of the Mediterranean Fruit Fly (*Ceratitidis capitata*) Wiedemann in Statutory Instrument No. 44 of 2007, in accordance with ISPM (International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures) No. 4 of 1995 (Requirements for the establishment of Pest Free Areas); and ISPM 26 of 2006 (Establishment of pest free areas for fruit flies) of the International Plant Protection Convention.

2. The medfly programme was initiated in Belize in 1977, by the Animal and Plant Health Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA/APHIS), primarily as a surveillance programme to determine the presence or absence of the Mediterranean fruit fly and implement eradication measures in the event of medfly detection. The first medfly was captured in March 1987 and as a result, the programme was modified to become the present comprehensive system. In 2000, the Belize Agricultural health Authority (BAHA), as mandated by the Belize Agricultural Health Authority Act (Chapter 211 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000-2003) came into effect and became the implementing agency responsible for management of all aspects of the medfly programme. On 28 August 2001, Belize was officially recognized as a medfly-free country by USDA.

3. The present system, that was adjusted and modified after the first detection in 1987, has four major components that include: a quarantine system which serves as the first line of defense; a comprehensive medfly surveillance programme in a medfly eradication action plan; and an export certification programme.

Quarantine System

4. The quarantine system is governed by the Belize Agricultural Health Authority Act. This regulates the import of plants and plant products. Quarantine inspectors are designated officers of BAHA assigned to the prevention of introduction of plant pests. Their duties include intercepting material of quarantine importance through the inspection of incoming luggage and cargo of agriculture products. There are presently 31 quarantine inspectors at six official points of entry.

Medfly Surveillance Programme

5. A national medfly surveillance programme based on an intensive trapping network is maintained throughout the country to ensure early detections in the event of a medfly introduction. The trapping network maintains a 1358 Jackson traps including 120 Phase Four traps distributed countrywide; an additional, 20 C&C traps are maintained in higher risk areas. The programme personnel comprise of one coordinator and five medfly technicians that service designated trapping routes every seven days. The trapping routes are designed to cover all rural and urban areas and include trapping on foot in hot spot areas and for delimitation surveys. The programme has consistently maintained a yearly trapping percentage above 90 per cent.

Medfly Action Plan

6. The medfly action plan sets out the actions that must be taken to ensure that any medfly detection is quickly and efficiently controlled to prevent its spread into medfly free areas. It also provides guidance on how to implement eradication measures. The programme has trained laboratory personnel to determine parameters that will trigger the eradication plan. The emergency plan is managed by a taskforce and executed by BAHA with the assistance of the relevant stakeholders.

7. Eradication measures may include chemical ground spraying with appropriate insecticides and baits, fruit stripping and destruction of all fruits within a 250 meter radius from the detection site, intensified trapping or internal quarantine.

National Internal Quarantine

8. Whenever a fertile gravid female or multiple fertile male med flies are detected and confirmed by laboratory analysis, the Medfly Task Force immediately delimits the area (approximately 81 square miles) to be quarantined and a Statutory Instrument is signed, declaring the area under internal quarantine. Technical personnel from the BAHA are assigned full-time, 24 hours per day, and seven days per week to the checkpoints along with assistance from the Police Department to prohibit the movement of medfly host material outside of the infested area.

9. After a period of 90 days (approximately three life cycles) of non-detection, the area is again declared medfly free and all quarantine restrictions are lifted.

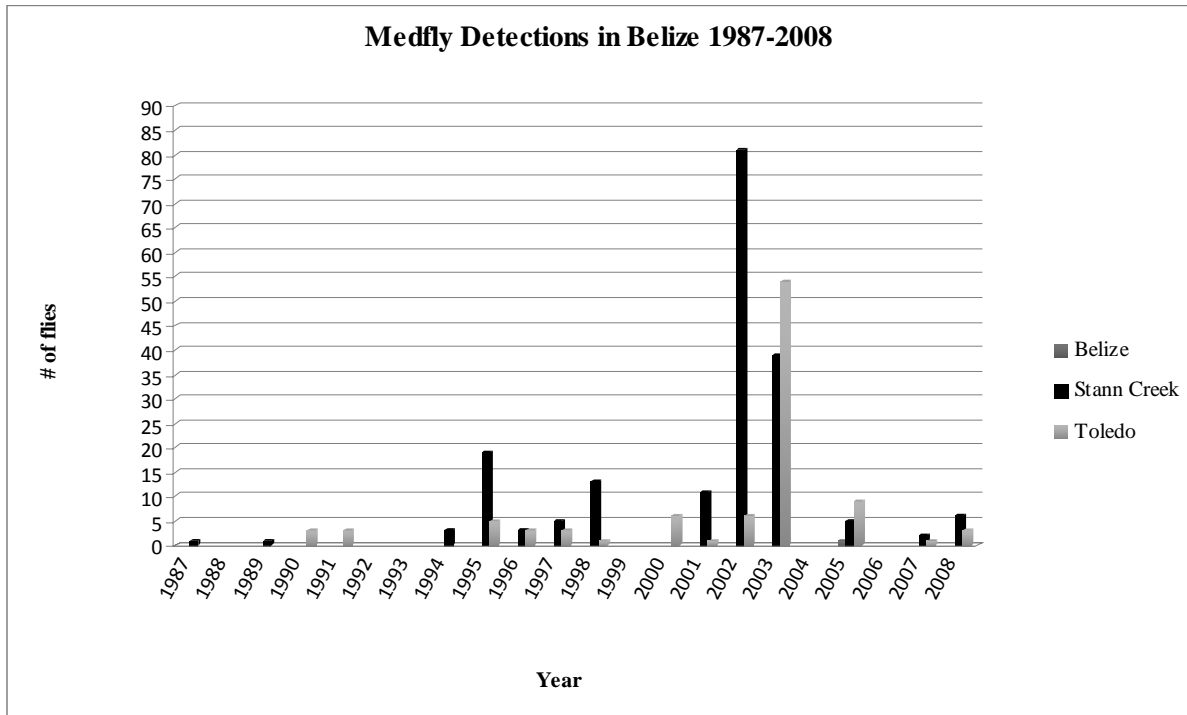
Export Certification Programme

10. The Belize Certification Programme is intimately related with the surveillance and eradication activities. Medfly host commodities are allowed access to US markets provided that Belize maintains its medfly free status. Whenever a fertile medfly is found, the Task Force evaluates the site and the distance of the detection site from the exporting commercial groves. If the distance is more than 4.5 miles away, the export of these commodities is not affected.

11. Plant Health Officers from BAHA conduct weekly field and packing facility inspections to ensure that acceptable phytosanitary practices are carried out prior to the issuance of a phytosanitary certificate. Inspection by the Plant Health Officer is required for a minimum of one per cent of a shipment, but in reality more than 20 per cent is actually inspected.

Historical Data

12. Detection data for the last 22 years indicate that while there have been sporadic interceptions of the medfly, this pest has never become established in Belize and the interceptions have been limited to the southern region of Belize (see graph below).



Source: Belize Agricultural Health Authority and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries

13. In summary, the historical data clearly demonstrates that the medfly has never become established in Belize and that BAHA has consistently been able to control and eradicate all interceptions thereby maintaining Belize free of this pest. This status is recognized by our principal trading partners and Belize has the science-based documentation to support this declaration.