

**INFORMATION ON MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO PREVENT THE ENTRY OF THE  
HUANGLONGBING (HLB) BACTERIUM THAT ATTACKS CITRUS FRUIT**

Communication from Costa Rica

The following communication, received on 11 June 2009, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Costa Rica.

1. The Phytosanitary Technical Commission of the State Phytosanitary Service (SFE) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) of Costa Rica has drawn up a series of measures aimed at preventing the entry into the country of the bacterial disease known as "Yellow Dragon Disease" or Huanglongbing (HLB).
2. These steps are being taken pursuant to the Declaration of Phytosanitary Emergency issued by the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) for the region of Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Republic following the recent identification of the disease in Belize. The disease has also been detected in Caribbean islands, Brazil, and Miami (United States).
3. The Commission agreed on the following immediate steps to prevent the disease:
  - (a) A decree will be drawn up by the MAG for the prevention and control of HLB.
  - (b) Resources will be assigned from the SFE's Pest Prevention Fund to help finance the measures taken.
  - (c) Inspection of citrus material at entry points into the country will be intensified, since the bacterium is transmissible by grafting through infected buds and the use of reproductive materials originating in countries or locations where the pest is present.
  - (d) A group of field and laboratory technicians will be trained in countries with experience in managing this pest, such as Brazil, Cuba and the United States, to become specialists in identifying the vector and its different stages in the field and in the laboratory.
  - (e) The group of technicians will be in charge of the overall strategy for training the different government and private technicians and producers in the citrus growing areas.
  - (f) Insect sampling: the HLB bacterium is transmitted from tree to tree by vector insects known as psyllids; in Asia and America, the vector is *Diaphorina citri*. In view of

the high population of psyllids in the main citrus growing areas, thorough sampling of this vector will be conducted for processing by the official laboratories to ensure that they are not carriers of the HLB bacterium. These samples will be taken in all of the citrus plantations, private orchards, and other possible host plants throughout the country. The activity of these insects peaks during the period of new citrus shoots, and that is where they need to be collected.

- (g) The country's laboratories will be assessed to determine their capacity for diagnosis of this pest so that any shortcomings can be overcome.
- (h) A dissemination campaign will be conducted using printed materials as well as radio and television.

4. Urgent measures need to be taken to protect the Costa Rican citrus sector. According to data from the Executive Secretariat for Agricultural Planning (SEPSA) for 2008, there are a total of 25,000 hectares of citrus plantations which generate an added value of 4,129,000,000 colones.

5. The symptoms of the disease include yellowing of the branches, mottling of the leaves, and deformed fruit with a bitter taste. Once the plants have been infected, there is no way to control or cure the disease, so that the trees must be eliminated to prevent the disease from spreading.

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