

**COSTA RICA ON ALERT DUE TO THE PRESENCE OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN
CUCURBIT FRUIT FLY (*ANASTREPHA GRANDIS*) IN PANAMA**

Communication from Costa Rica

The following communication, received on 25 June 2009, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Costa Rica.

1. The Costa Rican plant health authorities have been put on alert due to the presence of the South American cucurbit fruit fly (*Anastrepha grandis*) in Panama and have stepped up quarantine measures to prevent the entry of this pest into Costa Rica.
2. According to official reports by the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), this insect has been detected in the district of Chepo and in the province of Darién, an area of Panama bordering the Republic of Colombia.
3. The Plant Quarantine Department of the State Phytosanitary Service (SFE) has instructed staff at all entry points into the country to carry out a thorough inspection of imported products of plant origin; such products must carry an official plant health certificate issued by their country of origin which states the following: "**This material comes from an area free of *Anastrepha grandis***".
4. Any materials trying to enter the country without the relevant import permit are to be seized and destroyed at the point of entry.
5. According to a study carried out by the SFE, the climatic and trade conditions of the region are conducive to the spread of the pest, which means there is a high risk of it entering national territory.
6. *Anastrepha grandis* is a pest which attacks cucurbits such as watermelon, cucumber, pumpkin and melon. The main damage is caused by the larvae, which feed inside the fruit, destroying the pulp and thus making the fruit unfit for consumption or marketing. The feeding activity of the larvae often causes the fruit to fall prematurely; it also leads to rotting, since fungus and bacteria penetrate the small holes made by the larvae.
7. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA-APHIS) considers this pest to be of quarantine significance and worthy of attention given the possibility of it spreading to commercial melon crops. Melons are an important foreign exchange earner for Costa Rica since they are exported to the United States and Europe.
8. The adult fly, which can travel for several kilometres, is almost exclusively responsible for the natural spread of this pest. Spreading can, however, occur in other ways, such as through

larvae-infested fruit and the soil accompanying the plants, which can contain the insect at the pupa (cocoon) stage.

9. *Anastrepha grandis* has currently been reported in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and Panama.
