

**PHYTOSANITARY STATE OF EMERGENCY
DUE TO THE COTTON RAT PEST
(*SIGMODON SPP.*)**

Communication from Costa Rica

The following communication, received on 7 September 2009, is being circulated at the request of Costa Rica.

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1. By Decree No. 35398-MAG of 24 August 2009, the Government of the Republic declared a phytosanitary state of emergency in the province of Guanacaste and in the Central and North Pacific areas of the province of Puntarenas, owing to the presence of a pest of economic significance known as the cotton rat (*Sigmodon spp.*), and the effects of its presence in the above-mentioned areas.
 2. Officials of the State Phytosanitary Service (SFE), in a technical pest control and monitoring report, confirmed the presence of the cotton rat mainly in the provinces of Guanacaste and Puntarenas, in numbers exceeding normal management levels for producers, particularly in crops such as sugar cane, rice, maize and pineapple.
 3. According to the above-mentioned Decree, the owners or occupiers of areas where the pest is detected should collaborate with SFE officials or persons designated by the SFE in implementing officially recommended control measures.
 4. The SFE, for its part, will take charge of implementing the technical measures necessary to control the pest, such as: crop sampling to assess damage and trapping to determine rat population levels, as well as the use of rodenticide bait or massive trapping and interment of captured specimens.
 5. The Regional Head of the SFE Pest Monitoring and Control Service in Guanacaste has indicated that the production of rodenticide bait is being coordinated with regional organizations and independent producers, so as to ensure effective control and lower pest populations.
 6. The climatic conditions, characterized by prolonged periods of drought in humid regions or torrential rains in normally dry areas, tend to favour so-called opportunistic pests such as rodents, and at the same time hamper the survival of their natural predators. Thus, it has been made easier for the cotton rat to propagate, and in response to this situation the Costa Rican plant health authorities have taken all necessary steps to control and prevent such propagation.
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