

**NATIONAL PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOR HLB
(HUANGLONGBING)**

Statement by Argentina at the Meeting of 28 and 29 October 2009

The following communication, received on 18 December 2009, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Argentina.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CITRICULTURE IN ARGENTINA AND THE PROBLEM OF HLB

1. Argentina has a tradition of citrus farming and is known for its production of lemons, oranges, mandarins and grapefruit. It has an installed infrastructure for the production and exportation of fresh fruit, concentrated juices and other high value-added derivatives.

2. Argentine citriculture has been expanding at an annual rate of approximately 3 per cent over the past 20 years, and its products have succeeded in positioning themselves in major international markets. Citrus farming is of considerable socio-economic importance for the provinces concerned. In some cases, it is one of the largest contributors to the provincial gross product.

3. National citrus production totals approximately 3,300,000 tonnes per year. In terms of production, lemons account for the largest share, while in terms of cultivated area, oranges lead, followed by lemons, mandarins and grapefruit.

4. Forty-seven per cent of citrus production goes to industry, and 53 per cent is for fresh consumption. Of the latter, 32 per cent is consumed domestically and the remaining 21 per cent is exported. The country's citrus sector generates an economic value of approximately US\$500 million per year of which 70 per cent consists of exports of fresh fruit, concentrated juices and other derivatives.

5. Huanglongbing (HLB) is considered internationally to be the most destructive citrus disease. Over the past five years, it has progressed disturbingly in all citrus growing areas of the world, and particularly on the American continent, causing dramatic crop losses over a short time - and so far, no effective ways have been found to control it.

6. Argentina has had no recorded cases of HLB. However, one of the HLB vector insects, *Diaphorina citri* Kuwayama, otherwise known as "Asiatic citrus psyllid", is present in most of the citrus-growing provinces.

7. The potential for economic damage if this disease were to enter and establish itself in Argentina is enormous. The consequences would be extremely serious, considering: (a) the direct

damage caused to production (losses of 100 per cent of productive capacity in less than three years have been cited); (b) indirect damage (loss of markets, increase in production costs); (c) socio-economic impact (120,000 jobs, 16 industries, 529 packaging plants); and (d) the negative impact on the environment (larger doses and more frequent application of agrochemicals, for example).

II. NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE PREVENTION OF HLB

8. The above situation called for new strategies at the national level covering all aspects of the problem and all of the players directly or indirectly involved so that everything could be done to preserve the country's HLB-free status and to ensure the sustainability of the citrus sector.

9. To that end, the National Programme for the Prevention of HLB (Huanglongbing) was created, with the overall objective of strengthening the system for preventing the entry of HLB. The programme will cover an area of 140,000 hectares of citrus fruit and will involve approximately 5,300 producers.

10. The programme's specific objectives are:

- (a) To improve and adapt the regulatory framework and the control systems in force;
- (b) to introduce surveillance systems for early detection of HLB;
- (c) to make official HLB control mandatory for all citrus plant production whether for sale, transfer, own use or any other purpose;
- (d) to implement a contingency plan for the management and control of HLB should outbreaks be detected;
- (e) to develop specific channels of HLB research;
- (f) to implement training, awareness and dissemination schemes.

11. The Programme is made up of four operational components - (a) control, (b) surveillance, (c) research and development, (d) training and dissemination - and one coordination and follow-up component.

12. The **control component** essentially involves the strengthening of quarantine controls, inspection at the border and points of entry, en route controls to monitor the transport of propagation materials, registration of nurseries, and inspection of the production and marketing of citrus plants. It also involves drawing up a contingency plan to deal with emergencies.

13. The **phytosanitary surveillance component** groups together general and specific surveillance activities aimed at ensuring early detection of possible outbreaks of the pest and monitoring and recording the presence of the vector insect, *Diaphorina citri*. This component also involves the creation of a network of laboratories and the strengthening of their HLB diagnostic capacity.

14. The **research and development component** covers the aspects that are currently considered to be the Programme's priorities and on which further knowledge is required. A first stage would involve vector insect management techniques and diagnostic procedures.

15. The **training and dissemination component** is of particular importance, since this is a prevention programme. This component groups together all of the activities designed to boost

awareness, among the different actors involved, of the precautions to be taken, the regulations in force, and the need to communicate rapidly any suspected symptoms of the pest.

16. The *coordination and follow-up component* of the Programme will be under the responsibility of the Interinstitutional Coordination Unit made up of representatives of the SAGPyA (Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food), INTA (National Agricultural Technology Institute), SENASA (National Animal Health and Agri-Food Quality Service) and INASE (National Seed Institute).

17. The regional plant health organizations involved are the Regional Committee of the Northeast of Argentina (CORENEA), the Regional Committee of the Northwest of Argentina (CORENOA) and the Provincial Health Directorates, as well as the Federal Phytosanitary Committee (CFF) which forms part of the Federal Agricultural Council (CFA).

18. The private sector will participate through its representative and technical entities, such as the Argentine Citrus Federation (FEDERCITRUS), the Phytosanitary Association of the Northwest of Argentina (AFINOA), the Citrus Federation (FECIER), the Regional Health and Quality Foundation of the Northeast of Argentina (FUNDANEA), the Chamber of Citrus Exporters of the Northeast of Argentina (CECNEA), the Tucuman Citrus Association (ATC) and other entities from the citrus sector in the provinces involved.

19. A more detailed description of each one of the Programme's components can be found in Resolution SAGPyA 517/09, published in the Official Bulletin of 13 August 2009. The complete text of this Resolution is available in Spanish at: <http://www.infoleg.gov.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/155000-159999/156568/norma.htm>
