

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

INFORMATION FROM THE ASIAN AND PACIFIC COCONUT COMMUNITY

Note by the Secretariat

At its meeting of 15-16 March 2000, the Committee considered the request from the Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) for observer status. In that context, the Committee requested the Secretariat to seek further information from the APCC with respect to their activities in the area of plant health protection. The following response was received on 25 May 2000 from Mr. Norberto M Boceta, Executive Director of APCC.

I must say that I have particular interest on this issue to avail ourselves of a platform where the APCC member countries' interests are expressed and their welfare protected. The APCC Executive Board has also expressed its desire for APCC to gain observer status with WTO. I therefore hope for your continued assistance on the matter.

Please find below additional information regarding APCC's interest and work with respect to plant health protection and the phytosanitary issues.

1. 95 per cent to 100 per cent of the coconut palms in APCC member countries are grown without the application of inorganic fertilizers, insecticides or fungicides. Some farmers practice organic fertilization through the application of organic mulching materials and animal manure around the base of the coconut palms. Thus, it can be said that coconut products are organically produced.
2. As the palms are not sprayed with chemicals (insecticides/fungicides), no toxic residue should be found in the nuts. Pests are controlled by field sanitation, use of insect predators (biological means), covercropping, and other integrated measures. Spraying tall palms with chemicals is not practiced.
3. Crop improvement in coconut is done by conventional breeding work. This involves crossing dwarf with tall coconut varieties or tall by tall varieties to produce more productive and early fruiting hybrids. Coconut hybridization effort does not involve any unconventional genetic modification.
4. There are some problems with aflatoxin in copra and copra meal due to the growth of aflatoxin-related molds in copra during storage. However, the aflatoxin level of copra meal exported to Europe is within the allowable limit. No chemical treatment is applied on stored copra or copra meal. Thus, there should be no toxic residue from chemicals on these products. Since European buyers became strict on aflatoxin levels, there has not been any instance of rejection of shipment of copra meal from exporting countries.

5. APCC has already established codes and standards for aqueous coconut food products. This is now used as reference by APCC member countries to ensure quality of coconut food products consumed domestically and for the export market. If you wish to have a copy of this Manual, we would be pleased to send it by express mail.
 6. Coconut food processors (desiccated coconut factories, coconut milk powder/cream plants, etc.) in APCC member countries follow the HACCP method/system to ensure product quality and sanitation. This is being monitored by the appropriate government agencies in APCC member countries.
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