

**PANAMA: CERTIFICATION AND/OR DECLARATION OF AN
AREA FREE OF MEDITERRANEAN FRUIT FLY IN
THE AZUERO PENINSULA**

Communication from Panama

The following communication, received on 14 February 2007, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Panama.

1. Panama produces a wide variety of fruits, thanks to its agro-climatic conditions. Those conditions also favour the spread of various pests, particularly the Mediterranean fruit fly "*Ceratitis capitata*". As a result, a national programme has been developed that gives priority to certifying the Azuero peninsula as an area free of the Mediterranean fruit fly.
2. The Mediterranean fruit fly was detected in Panama in 1963. In the 1990s, incentives for exports to new markets and the expansion of production areas, particularly for citrus fruit, mango, papaya and chilli pepper, lead the Government to increase its resources and activities and to take a greater interest in controlling or eradicating this pest. However, the shortage of resources and the lack of integrated action at regional level hampered the long-term programmes and regional cooperation that are necessary for pest eradication.
3. The quarantine on exports of fruit from countries infested with Mediterranean fruit fly curbed exports to international markets. Moreover, this pest was responsible for significant direct economic losses caused by damage to various types of fruit, and it substantially reduced the volume of products that could be sold locally. The high cost of maintaining surveillance activities and other precautionary practices, including country-wide pesticide application, drove up the cost of production, and severe economic loss was caused by the lack of export markets.
4. The newly introduced international obligation on Contracting Parties to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) of 1997, requiring them to provide for the recognition of pest-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence as acceptable phytosanitary measures has created new commercial opportunities among the countries concerned.
5. The concept of pest-free production areas, localities and sites enables countries infested with any pest subject to particular regulations to produce and export fruit, provided that compliance with the requirements pertaining to pest-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence can be fulfilled, demonstrated and maintained.
6. In this connection, Panama has since 2005 been working on a project for the "Declaration of the Azuero Peninsula as Free of Mediterranean Fruit Fly", the purpose of which is to establish a

Mediterranean fruit fly free area, so as to increase the volume of exports to international markets and the domestic market.

7. This plan has involved the establishment and maintenance of permanent trapping routes, in order to verify the absence of Mediterranean fruit fly and to check the demography of other fruit flies of the genus *Anastrepha*, of economic significance to Panama.

8. The programme has been supplemented by training and information courses for technical experts and national producers on the new methodologies for the management and control of fruit flies.

9. In 2006, a total of 468 traps were installed under the programme on 282 sentinel farms in the Azuero peninsula.

10. Tests were conducted on 6,030 samples from traps installed in the field, and these were reviewed by the laboratory of the Ministry of Agricultural Development between January and December 2006, resulting in a total of 20,032 phytosanitary diagnoses of fruit fly. The clinical diagnosis reported no captures of *Ceratitis capitata* and the oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera* spp., which includes *Bactrocera dorsalis* and *Bactrocera carambolae*).

11. Captures were restricted to nine species of the genus *Anastrepha*, the great majority of which, or 97 per cent of the total, were mango or West Indian fruit flies, *Anastrepha obliqua*. Other species of economic significance detected in smaller percentages were: the guava fruit fly (*Anastrepha striata*), the sapotace fruit fly (*Anastrepha serpentina*) and the papaya fruit fly (*Toxotrypana curvicauda*).

12. A database is operated, and it is updated and harmonized with USDA-APHIS. Records are also kept for the 282 sentinel farms and 468 installed traps, with graphics showing captures and population trends in species of economic significance.
