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CARIBBEAN FOOD CROPS SOCIETY

46

**Forty Sixth
Annual Meeting 2010**

**Boca Chica, Dominican Republic
Vol. XLVI – Number 2
T-STAR Invasive Species Symposium**

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
46th ANNUAL MEETING

Caribbean Food Crops Society
46th Annual Meeting
July 11-17, 2010

Hotel Oasis Hamaca
Boca Chica, Dominican Republic

“Protected agriculture: a technological option for competitiveness of the Caribbean”

“Agricultura bajo ambiente protegido: una opción tecnológica para la competitividad en el Caribe”

“Agriculture sous ambiance protégée: une option technologique pour la compétitivité de las Caraïbe”

**United States Department of Agriculture,
T-STAR Sponsored Invasive Species Symposium**

**Toward a Collective Safeguarding System for the Greater Caribbean Region:
Assessing Accomplishments since the first Symposium in Grenada (2003)
and Coping with Current Threats to the Region**

**Special Symposium Edition
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PERSPECTIVE OF CARICOM ON KEY SHORTCOMINGS IN SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW CAN THEY BE REMEDIED?

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I want to thank the Organizers of the USDA T-STAR Invasive Species Symposium for their support to the Region in providing this continuing useful forum for dialogue on safeguarding against the threats of invasive alien species and for allowing this opportunity to share the CARICOM Secretariat's perspective on the key shortcomings in safeguarding arrangements in the Region.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Over the past decade and a half, we have seen that globalization (regionalisation efforts) and technological advances allow goods and people to move to far-off places and at a much faster rate than before. Our (human) activities and natural forces directly or indirectly allow for plants, animals, and other organisms to be transported and deposited to new habitats with a speed and efficiency that could be frightening in the context of invasive species.

A Few highlights of our current status of pest entries in CARICOM:

Black Sigatoka is now present in eight CARICOM countries; this has impacted the livelihood of banana farmers and economies of the countries involved in the production of this major export crop. Countries reliant on banana exports, such as Saint Lucia, Jamaica, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, have been harshly hit. The possibility of Black Sigatoka spreading to other producer countries demands a shift in resources for extra vigilance and enforcement of emergency preparedness plans by those not yet affected.

Red Palm Mite was not known to occur in the Western Hemisphere before 2004, when it was found in Martinique. In 2005, it was reported in Saint Lucia and Dominica. In 2006, it became established in nine countries: the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, and Venezuela. It was first confirmed present in the United States in 2007 (Espinosa and Hodges). **Hence in the short space of six years, thirteen countries were affected.** The disease is now in Central and South America. [Red Palm Mite has been reported in 32 palm species, including coconut, areca, and date palms, as well as heliconias, ginger lilies, bird of paradise, and screw pine. In the Caribbean, it also causes severe damage to bananas and plantains. Tourism may be impacted as palm trees disappear. Apart from the esthetical value to tourism, the beverage trade in coconut water is down and so too is the dry nut trade.]

Citrus Greening is a bacterial disease of citrus with no known cure. The citrus industry of Belize and Trinidad and Tobago is being impacted — fresh fruit trade is down. Jamaica has increased surveillance of their borders.

Fruit Flies have become a major problem. The United States has banned exports of fruits from Haiti due to fruit flies. Florida no longer imports fruit from Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Suriname, and Guyana.

Marine Issues involve pests and diseases_ "hitchhiking" on airplanes, ships, trucks, packing materials, and shipping containers from country to country (McGee 2001: 144).

The International Maritime Organization (IMO 2006b) contends that the introduction of invasive species is one of the greatest threats to Earth's oceans, alongside marine pollution, overexploitation of marine resources, and the physical alteration/destruction of marine habitats (IMO 2006a). The shipping industry and the ballast water of its vessels clearly play a critical role in the conservation or destruction of global ecosystems. Shipping vessels transport approximately 10 billion tons of ballast water globally per year (IMO 1999). This traffic increases the potential for the accidental transfer of unwanted species; an estimated 3,000 species are transferred to new environments each day in ballast water (IMO 1999).

Animal Health: Reported cases of swine flu and avian influenza over time have shown that CARICOM countries are not isolated from global events. The increased movement of people to and from the Region increases vulnerability as never before. [The burden of proof — relying on surveillance records to be declared free from specific disease — must be shown by CARICOM countries, such as Guyana, Suriname, and Belize, if food security needs are to be met by trade in meat and meat products.]

Comment: I wonder if our archaic laws prevented entry to some extent. Those laws provided for a certain measure of defense for known threats — ironic that we may need to revise them if under the current trading system they are found to be too stringent — but are we equipped/prepared to establish similar or equivalent defense our laws provided?

Key shortcomings in our systems:

✚ Described at Best: Fair

- National level — border inspections
 - Training for pest detection, identification, and response to management of spread or eradication
 - Land borders
 - Length of border
- Number of control points
 - Islands — many
- Vessels — inadequacy and cost sea or air patrols
- Inspection points — yachts, smugglers, etc.
- Ballast water and garbage
- Regional level
 - Capacity of MS is at best poor to fair — Pest Detection identification and response (field and border)
 - Lack of HR
 - Lack of training opportunities
- Cost of opportunity

✚ Public Information Dissemination

- Practically non existent

- ✚ Central or Linked — Networking Coordination
 - Dynamism of Officials and interest of the Member States

WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR A GOOD SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENT?

First instance:

- ✚ National and Regional Dedicated Coordination
 - Limited information with a view to extension of the nodes of information (human)
 - Strengthening focal points for information — existing and establish new focal point where non existent
 - Links with the existing networks
- ✚ Quarantine Strengthening Needed for All Countries
 - Officials
 - Farmers
- ✚ Border Control — How do we find the solutions for large land masses and numerous islands within a territory? Remains a challenge and a shortcoming
- ✚ CPHDs – Need to address this issue, with a view to recommendations at the regional level.
 - Generate the economics to attract interest of the policy makers!
 - Public Awareness Important — Cohesive and coherent targeted programme; targeted in the first instance; general public and concurrent if possible; and formal and informal education system need to be injected with the information, brochure, literature
 - Customs officials also

Thank you!