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OPERATIONALIZING CRISIS AS A REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES SAFEGUARDING  
MODEL: EXPLORING MULTIPLE PLATFORM INITIATIVES

Special Workshop Edition  
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REGULATORY/COORDINATION CONSIDERATIONS FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A CARIBBEAN INVASIVE SPECIES STRATEGY FROM THE USDA-APHIS PERSPECTIVE

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The Caribbean Invasive Species Working Group (CISWG) has developed the Caribbean Regional Invasive Species Intervention Strategy (CRISIS) which has been recognized by CARICOM's Council on Trade and Economic Development as a framework for enhanced cooperation to effectively safeguard the agriculture, natural resources, and human health of the individual entities of the Caribbean Region from the economic and social impact caused by invasive species. The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) also recognizes that only a regional strategy such as this will effectively meet that safeguarding goal.

The global environment is seemingly becoming smaller as transportation and trade opportunities make international travel and business a common occurrence. With this increase in international commerce, comes escalating threats posed by exotic invasive species on the commodities which make up our food supply and those which bolster our economies through exports.

No single country, no matter how large or resourceful, can effectively protect itself from the threats of invasive species in isolation from other Nations. No single country, no matter how small, is exempt from the impact of invasive species. Only through international cooperation, based on regional strategies, can we effectively win the battle to address our shared vulnerability to invasive species.

The USDA APHIS, as an official member of the Caribbean Invasive Species Working Group, considers itself one of the many essential partners in this effort, and is leveraging our activities and resources toward actions aligned with the strategic region-wide approach in order to stem the migration of exotic pests and disease into and from the Caribbean. We recognize that sometimes only limited resources are available in some of the smaller Caribbean and Central American countries and understand that without a Regional effort of cooperation, the overall goal of mitigating plant pests and animal diseases within the Region and safeguarding the Region from an influx of exotic pests and diseases through trade will be difficult to achieve.

There are numerous projects and activities of interest that are conducted by APHIS or its cooperators in the Greater Caribbean Basin. Our limited Florida staff as well has pursued these interests as supplemental projects among other priorities with striking success. These activities have leveraged existing partnerships and developed new ones with APHIS International Services, Universities, South Florida import/export industries, and foreign plant protection, export, and production interests. Recently, APHIS PPQ administration recognized that as a matter of sound business practice and in accordance with the core recommendations of the Plant Safeguarding Review conducted by our stakeholders in 1999, it was time to establish a program that would be dedicated to guiding and coordinating these many related initiatives.

The goal of the Florida-based APHIS PPQ Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative (CSI) is to target and reduce the risk of plant pests establishing in the United States through the Florida

pathway. In the immediate short term, the program will continue to focus on pests originating in the Greater Caribbean Basin and enhance six existing major activities: 1) coordination, 2) leveraging resources, 3) offshore information, 4) focused exclusion, 5) focused domestic survey, and 6) offshore mitigation.

You will hear more detail in later presentations by our APHIS staff, but APHIS is participating in the following offshore projects as part of this Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative:

1. Regulatory Outreach to Exporting Countries; Compliance through Education -- The regulatory outreach project has as its goal, compliance with U.S. regulations through education, training, and development activities directed toward importers, foreign producers, shippers, and regulatory personnel in foreign countries. Pest problems on commodities shipped to the U.S. can be mitigated at the point of origin before they are subjected to the inspection and regulatory control processes at the U.S. ports of entry. APHIS is committed to infrastructure building within the Region through technical assistance. We will continue to provide technical expertise at regional workshops and lend other assistance that will strengthen safeguarding systems and build plant and animal health awareness. These activities include training for commodity risk assessments and pest detection and survey activities. Because diagnostic capacities are sometimes limited in the Region, APHIS will assist with research and training activities conducted in the Caribbean and share available resources such as pest identification keys, data sheets, and other diagnostic tools.

2. Offshore Pest Information Program; Caribbean Guidelines -- APHIS' invasive species activities in the Caribbean have centered on surveillance, control, and technical assistance. APHIS' representation on the Caribbean Invasive Species Working Group (CISWG) will help ensure a regional approach to these activities. Our APHIS Caribbean representative in the Dominican Republic is working with Caribbean cooperators in such areas as pest monitoring, fruit fly and snail surveys, inspection/detection/control activities with chili thrips, risk identification on new and emerging pests and diseases such as the red palm mite, infrastructure building through technical assistance, and offshore mitigation through cooperative biological control projects.

3. Risk Notification System -- A risk notification system has been developed by APHIS so that foreign Ministries of Agriculture will be informed on a timely basis of each pest interception on plant propagative material at South Florida ports of entry. This project will hopefully minimize the future shipment of infested material thereby reducing the costs incurred by exporters and growers for rejection, disposal, or treatment of infested shipments, and reduce the risk of pest introduction into the U.S. or other Caribbean trading partner countries.

4. Clean Stock Program -- As a component of the current Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) APHIS is working with the government of Costa Rica on a "clean stock approach" for *Dracaena* plants. The idea is to work at the grower level to reduce specific problem pests in the field and along the export chain in order to prove that pests can be reduced in a systematic way. Success in this project could possibly lead to similar future programs on other commodities in other countries.

5. Offshore Pest Mitigation -- The Greater Caribbean Basin is located at the southern doorstep of the U.S. The Caribbean nations are rich in beautiful tropical commodities coveted by the American consumer. For this reason many of the pests that develop in the Caribbean region are easily spread to the U.S. through commerce and natural means. It behooves the U.S. to work with the Caribbean nations in controlling pests of mutual concern so that the pest risk can be mitigated at the source and so that control technologies can be tested and perfected in anticipation of applying that technology in the U.S. when the pest eventually spreads there. Invasive pests can cause severe economic losses both directly through damaging produce and indirectly through trade quarantines. Preemptive programs that reduce or slow the spread of pests to the U.S. could substantially minimize their impact on agriculture. APHIS is assisting foreign governments with survey, biological and chemical control programs against specific plant pests. Biological control is one of those technologies that the U.S. can assist in developing and implementing offshore. Biological control programs have been cooperatively developed in the Region for pink hibiscus mealybug and papaya mealybug. APHIS will now help determine the distribution of passionvine mealybug and coffee mealybug within the Caribbean. We will also support the evaluation of a classical biological control program implemented for these pests. Scirtothrips dorsalis, or chili thrips, is another serious economic pest with a wide host range that has recently been spreading throughout the Region. APHIS will continue to monitor inspection and detection activities in some infested Caribbean countries and, where possible, provide population dynamics studies to assist in development of control strategies. Lessons learned in the Caribbean will help control incipient populations recently detected in the U.S. Other pests will also be considered in the future. We believe that the future of cooperative safeguarding lies in offshore pest mitigation when possible.

6. Caribbean Invasive Species Surveillance and Information Program – The CISWG has proposed the development of a Caribbean Invasive Species Surveillance and Information Program (CISSIP). This program will be discussed in more detail later during this symposium. It has the potential to bolster the pest surveillance, pest identification, and pest information infrastructure within the Region. Since APHIS is already utilizing similar systems within the U.S., and since an enhanced Caribbean Basin safeguarding infrastructure will also protect the U.S. from the introduction of significant exotic pests, we are prepared to provide as much technical assistance and guidance to this regional initiative as possible. These components will enable the Region to meet its obligations for accurate pest detection and reporting as part of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

7. Offshore Pest Detection – Based in Central America, this project has established a sentinel survey program around the Panama Canal, and is proposing a Central America regional Pest Detection Program that could provide synergy to or be replaced by participation in the proposed CISSIP program.