



Press Release – 15th Annual Meeting of Caribbean Plant Health Directors Forum (CPHD)

CPHD WARNS OF NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES TO LIVELIHOODS, FOOD SECURITY AND TRADE

September 16, 2022

At the recently concluded meeting of the CPHD, the region was warned of the impact of pest and invasive species and the negative consequences posed to the livelihoods, food security, trade and the environment of Member Countries. The meeting, which was held from 14 to 16 September, 2022 via virtual platform, received updates from partner agencies, technical working groups and lead experts on plant health and allied areas encompassing a strategic plant health plan to support effective plant health safeguarding systems to help reduce the forty percent (40%) annual food crop losses caused by plant pest.

This year, the Regional Priority Pest List (RPPL) Working Group presented to the meeting, the model employed to examine parameters such as invasiveness, economic, social and environmental impact of ten (10) quarantine pests that would have highest probability of impact that are either not present or if present, is in limited distribution and being officially controlled. The process resulted in identification of the Red Ring Nematode that affect mainly coconut palms and present in a few countries as the number one priority crop pest for the region. This was followed by *Fusarium oxysporum fsp cubens* TR4, which affects all banana, plantains and all musa species; *Ceratitis capitata/rosa*, the Mediterranean Fruit Fly (Medfly), which can affect all varieties fruits and vegetables; *Steneotarsonemus spinki* (Rice panicle mite); *Helicoverpa armigera* (Old World Bollworm), *Ralstonia solanacearum* Race 3 Biovar 2 (Brown rot of potato), Banana bunchy top virus, Maize lethal necrosis disease, *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* (Red Palm Weevil), and *Peronosclerospora philippinensis* (Downy Mildew).

In support of the management of those pests and to build a safeguarding continuum, the CPHD in collaboration with Regional Partner Agencies launched and piloted the Caribbean Biosecurity Interceptions System (CBIS) and the Pest Caribbean Surveillance Tool. These tools will allow for the analysis of noncompliance issues encountered in trade over time, and act as an entry point for data collected in relation to pest threat surveillance in the Caribbean region. The CBIS tool was successfully piloted in two countries namely Jamaica and Cayman Islands and is to be rolled out to eighteen (18) other Member Countries in 2023. The Pest Caribbean Surveillance Tool was launched and piloted in St. Kitts/Nevis where a trainers program was conducted for plant health staff.

To achieve an intervention strategy for surveillance at ports for the prevention of the entry of pests and invasive species in the region, Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) for four (4) priority pests of mutual concern for the Caribbean and the United States, as well as Guidelines for the conduct of Tabletop Simulation Exercises were developed. The tabletop simulations for the pests *Tuta absoluta* (Tomato Leafminer), *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 (Brown Rot of Potato), *Xanthomonas citri* (Citrus Canker), and Citrus Leprosis virus was conducted in five countries. The exercise served to prepare the National Plant Protection Offices (NPPOs) for pest incursions which potentially threaten food and nutrition security, trade and the socio-economic development of the Region. In addition, it has provided best practices which can be used to optimize the outcomes of the simulations when scaled up to other countries in the Greater Caribbean.

Another highlight of the annual meeting was the announcement by The University of the West Indies, Faculty of Food and Agriculture, Trinidad and Tobago to now offer a fully online and accredited Plant Quarantine Basics Course from January 2023. This course seeks to develop the technical skills of plant quarantine workers across the region to enable them to safeguard their country's borders from the entry of unwanted Invasive Alien Species (IAS).

For more information on the annual meeting and other relevant CPHD activities visit the CPHD Website <http://www.cphdforum.org/> or email the CPHD Secretariat at secretariat@cphdforum.org.