

The Technical Working Group on Palm Pests

OVERVIEW:

At the first meeting of the Plant Health Directors' Meeting held April 23-25, 2008 at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat (CCS) Headquarters, Georgetown, Guyana, it was agreed to form several Technical Working Groups (TWGs). One such group was the Palm Pest Complex Group which held its first meeting in Trinidad, January 12-13, 2009. The TWG on Palm Pests held its second meeting on July 29 2010 at The Gran Courland Hotel, Tobago. The third meeting was held on July 19th 2012 at the Ministry of Food Production, Research Division, Central Experiment Station, Centeno, Trinidad. At the 3rd Caribbean Plant Health Directors' Meeting held in Guyana, 4-5 March 2009, it was agreed to revise the name from The Palm Pest Complex Group to the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Palm Pests. The TWG on Red Palm Mite was subsequently subsumed into this TWG on Palm Pests.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

The general objective of this working group is to safeguard the Caribbean from threats and/or the impacts of introduction, economic damage and spread of pests of palms through scientific investigation/research and the provision of advice on all matters related to pests of palms

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

1. To investigate the biology and distribution of Pest of Palms
2. Maintenance of a list of natural enemies of Pests of Palms
3. Recommendations to the Plant Health Directors that RPM remains on the Priority Pest List for the Region.
4. Identification, compilation and regular updating of critical reference material for Pest of Palms and its natural enemies
5. Assist in the conduct of pest risk analyses
6. Determine and recommend system(s) for prevention, surveillance, eradication, and/or management of Palm Pest at points of entry or in the field.
7. Production of manual and or technological packages for the management of Palm Pest.
8. Ensure that the critical capacity is available (Equipment and training and advise on projects and programmes required to conduct diagnostics necessary for detection, control or eradication and establish a mechanism for verification and protocols for shipment of samples

9. Development of an emergency preparedness plan to address outbreaks of Palm Pest
10. Advise on an appropriate Public awareness campaign
11. Keep up to date with new methods of identification (including rapid diagnostic capabilities), prevention, spread, control, and eradication
12. Address emerging issues
13. Prepare discussion papers if relevant
14. Assist Member States to fulfill the 'transparency' obligations of the WTO & IPPC (based on request of the Member States and action taken to assist
15. Make recommendations for international, regional or national considerations (including ISPMs etc).
16. Verification and validation of new information inclusive of:
 - Natural enemies
 - Outbreaks
 - New Hosts
17. Advise on synergies with other initiatives, programmes and projects
18. Advise on affiliations with other Groups and associations
19. Report to the Meeting of Plant Health Directors

MEMBERSHIP:

Barbados,	Saint Lucia,
Dominica,	St. Maarten,
Grenada,	St. Vincent and the Grenadines,
Guyana,	Trinidad and Tobago (Chair),
Jamaica,	Cayman Islands,
Martinique,	

Supporting Organizations: IICA, FAO, USDA APHIS GCSI, CAB International and CARICOM Sec.

Countries Affected

All 27 Countries occupying the Caribbean Sea

IMPACT:

Coconut palms are a vital part of the subsistence agriculture in many tropical coastal areas. The trees require very few inputs, and yet provide food, fuel and shelter as well as much-needed income. However, with the spread of Red Palm Mite and Lethal Yellowing (LY) Disease, two (2) major pests of concern of Palms, throughout the Caribbean region is having a serious impact.

Lethal Yellowing (LY) disease is not only destructive on coconut but on at least 30 other species on palms. It is particularly aggressive on the tall varieties grown almost exclusively in the Caribbean Region. The economic impact is multifaceted in keeping with the many uses of the plant. A major commodity of international trade is copra, the dried endosperm, which yields oil that is extensively used in the production of soap, margarine, cooking oil, cosmetics and a variety of processed foods, ice cream and pastries. The disease has been responsible for the deaths of over 7 million coconut palms in Jamaica alone.

Red palm mite was first sighted in Martinique in 2004 , which was the first in the Western Hemisphere. Since then, the mite has been confirmed in Saint Lucia and Dominica in 2005, and Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Jamaica and Grenada among others in 2006. The mites are usually found on the underside of leaves, often in large groups of hundreds of individuals and are visible to the naked eye. The explosive appearance of red palm mite in these countries makes it a serious pest risk for the Caribbean and sub-tropical regions of the USA. The mite could be an enormous threat to the ornamental palm industry as well as banana, coconut and date production. Significant infestations have been observed in the Caribbean on banana plants (*Musa spp., Musaceae*), heliconias (*heliconiaceae*) and gingers (*Ziniberaceae*).

Damages to coconut, ornamental palms and bananas are extensive. It is considered that the Red Palm Mite has serious consequences on these industries for Caribbean Islands. Damage to coconuts results in a 70 % yield reduction and possibly job losses leading to a major socio-economic problem for some of the islands.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

1. A draft Regional Palm Pest was developed.
2. A prioritized list of palm pest which was prepared by a Committee of Experts
3. A list of Exotic Quarantine Pest that poses a threat to the Region was developed.
4. Production of data sheets for Lethal Yellowing of coconuts, Red Palm Mite, Red Ring disease and Red Palm Weevil
5. A resource book recently published - : Palms of Trinidad and Tobago” to be distributed to countries.

USEFUL LINKS:

<http://www.trinidadexpress.com/featured-news/97995339.html>

<http://caripestnetwork.org/>

http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/enpp/ento/red_palm_mite.html

<http://www.cabi.org/isc/?compid=5&dsid=46792&loadmodule=datasheet&page=481&site=144>