

The Latin American Front includes Mexico to protect banana crops against Fusarium R4T

Fourteen Latin American countries sign the “Regional declaration of agricultural authorities on Foc TR4”.



Representatives of 14 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean signed the “Regional declaration of agricultural authorities on FocR4T” with the purpose of forming a common front to protect the bananas production against *Fusarium oxysporum* fungus, Tropical race 4 (Foc TR4).

During the regional meeting of agricultural and livestock authorities, Phytosanitary chapter, held in Quito, Ecuador, it was agreed to jointly put into operation the Regional Action Plan against this disease, which affects banana crops and other Musaceae.

Phytosanitary authorities of Bolivia, Belize, Brazil, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Dominican Republic; and the ministers of Agriculture of Costa Rica, Colombia and Ecuador analyzed prevention strategies on the basis of a suspicion of fungus present in two farms of La Guajira, in the north of Colombia.

Participants emphasized that this “Regional declaration of agricultural authorities on Foc TR4” seeks to create the basis to keep the *Fusarium* fungus race 4 out of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a proposal

agreed with the representatives and the organizations, which are part of this regional meeting.

On behalf of the head of Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER), Víctor Villalobos Arámbula; the chief director of the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA), Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, signed the statement and reinforced the commitment of the Mexican Government to collaborate in this kind of initiatives, which benefit the agricultural production of the region.

In its intervention, the minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Ecuador, Xavier Lazo, underlined that 80% of the global exportable supply of bananas is produced in Latin America and the Caribbean countries, which represents more than seven thousand million dollars in exports per year.

The executive director of the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), Efraín Medina, emphasized the importance of establishing strategic alliances among countries and international organisms to face and prevent pests and diseases, using specific actions to short, medium and long term.

In this context, an informal meeting of agricultural ministers and authorities from Ecuador and the OIRSA region took place. In this meeting, Ecuador expressed its interest in being part of the organization of Central America. Mexico considers this integration as a positive action.

Also attended to the meeting representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); of the OIRSA; of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA); of the Andean Community (CAN) and of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).