

# The Secretariat of Agriculture declares the eradication of the Mediterranean fly outbreak in Manzanillo, Colima

Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, general director of the National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) underscored that the eradication of the Mediterranean fly is a shared achievement between the business sector, small and medium scale producers, and society, because without their support, the technical efforts of the federal government would not have been as successful.



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Víctor Villalobos Arámbula, Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development, announced that the outbreak of the *Ceratis capitata* (Wiedemann) Mediterranean fly, which was detected on April 6, 2021, in Manzanillo, Colima, has been eradicated, as the last catches of this species were recorded on October 26, 2021.

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The secretary of Agriculture pointed out that with this actions Mexico is protecting the national fruit and vegetable production that is grown on 1.9 million hectares, with a commercial value over 189 billion pesos.

If this threat had been left unattended, 250 different types of fruit and vegetable cultivars grown on an area exceeding 1.9 million hectares would have been harmed, leading to social and economic consequences.

This important joint effort between producers, technicians, agrobusinesses, associations and municipal, state, and federal authorities reinforces the prestige and reputation of Mexico in health matters, which guarantees the food production of the country, for the benefit of national supply and international markets.

Mr. Villalobos Arámbula stated that Mexico affirms its international standing as a respectable nation on the subjects of agro-alimentary production and social responsibility, since the country is the twelfth agriculture, livestock, and fishery producer, and the eighth food exporter in the world.

Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, general director of the SENASICA, underscored the fact that the eradication of the Mediterranean fly is a shared achievement between the business sector, small and medium scale producers, and society, because without their support, the technical efforts of the federal government would not have been as successful.

In his words, the SENASICA is a system that belongs to everybody, because it entails work based on trust, which makes possible to overcome pest invasions that endanger our food production, and consequently, our food security.

The timely detection of the fly made a difference in its control and eradication over a period of seven months, and its verifiable absence during the past eight months.

The federal public official thanked the support of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (APHIS-USDA), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Conacofi (National Plant Health Advisory Board), and the support of 93 technicians from 17 state plant health committees.

George Fox, representative of the USDA in Mexico, pointed out that the risks that endanger the world's agriculture are numerous, and that the fruit flies are among the major threats, due to their destructive capacity.

Facing this emergency in Colima, Mexico solved the issue in a record time, which is exemplary for the rest of the continent, and affirms its importance in the world's food trade.

Francisco Ramírez y Ramírez, general Director of Plant Health of the SENASICA, reported that 232 technicians worked in tiers in the implementation of the National Emergency Device: 60 from the Moscamed Program, 20 from the National Reference Center on Biological Control, and 59 temporary technicians. Moreover, he highlighted the participation of technicians from organizations belonging to the productive sector.

The insect was recorded within a delimited area of 4,289 square kilometers in Colima, where phytosanitary measures were implemented to achieve its eradication.

4,436 traps were installed to monitor the pests, which were checked 223,554 times over the 15 months that the emergency lasted.

Also, 23,053 fruit samples were analyzed, which confirmed that the only host of the pest was the tropical almond (*Terminalia catappa*), a decorative tree that is widely present in the region.

Moreover, and with the support of the state governments and plant health committees, a surveillance network was operated with 949 traps installed in Jalisco and 1,102 in Michoacán, and 8,356 samples of fruits vulnerable to the pest were analyzed. The Mediterranean fly was not detected in either of those states.

Plant health experts placed 37,038 devices with food lure and destroyed 359.58 metric tons of tropical almond fruits and other potential hosts.

The technicians carried out land sprays with organic insecticide to control the pest over 45,282 hectares in the urban area, and air sprays over 4,464 hectares over the agricultural areas in the municipalities of Manzanillo and Armería.

To reduce the reproduction of the pest, the SENASICA released 1,356.89 million sterile Mediterranean flies over the air, and 61.80 million over land, from week to week over a 12-month period, and as method of biological control, released 31.23 million natural enemies of the pest on the sites where the insect had been recorded.

To prevent the dispersal of the pest towards other regions of the country, the SENASICA put in operation seven Internal Verification Points in the municipalities of Colima, Cuauhtémoc, Manzanillo, and Tecomán, through which the mobilization of host goods was stopped.

The group of technical advisors on fruit flies, coordinated by the Conacofi, monitored the implementation of the National Emergency Device, and issued recommendations for the operation thereof. Likewise, there was support on site from experts appointed by the IAEA, and the APHIS-USDA.

To protect the state, which is vulnerable against the introduction of exotic pests since its home to the seaport with the highest introduction of containers into the country, the Field Operations Center for Colima now operates permanently from Tecomán.

Jaime Sotelo García, Undersecretary of Rural Development of Colima, recognized the institutional efforts and coordination to stop the outbreak, and underscored the importance of addressing health and safety issues on a priority

basis, with the aim of increasing the agro-alimentary production and trade in the state.

The representatives of the business sector agreed that the leadership of the SENASICA and their open attitude to develop joint strategies made possible for the different business activities in Colima and other states to gain awareness about the importance of the pest control and eradication actions, which protects thousands of jobs and the production of healthy and safe foods.

The meeting was also attended by Maritza Juárez Durán, director of the National Fruit Fly Program, Esmeralda López Mendoza, representative of the Secretariat of Agriculture in Colima, and Miguel Espinosa Hernández, president of the Plant Health Statal Committee.

For the industry, the following individuals also attended the meeting: Norberto Valencia, on behalf of the CNA (National Agriculture and Livestock Council), José Luis Bustamante Fernández, president of Aneberries (National Association of Exporters of Berries), Eduardo Castillejos Allard, president of EMEX (Association of Packagers of Mangos for Export), and José Luis Gallardo Anguiano, president of the APEAM (Mexican Association of Producers and Exporters of Avocados for Export).