

FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION
DA-2006-57
December 15, 2006

SUBJECT: Red Palm Mite (*Raoiella indica*) Technical Working Group Formed

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On November 7, 2006, detections of the red palm mite, *Raoiella indica*, were confirmed by APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) in several areas on the eastern half of Puerto Rico. This is a pest of international quarantine significance and a direct threat to the ornamental palm and coconut industries in Puerto Rico, as well as a potential threat to these industries in Florida, Alabama, Arizona, California, Texas, and Hawaii. Red palm mites are also reported to have new hosts, including bananas, plantains, and ginger.

APHIS PPQ has informed U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to heighten inspection vigilance of agricultural host plants during pre-departure passenger and cargo clearance of flights destined for mainland United States. In addition, PPQ has coordinated the formation of a technical working group of subject matter experts to identify methods and strategies for survey, detection, identification, and management of the red palm mite.

This pest originates from Asia and Africa. It was first detected in the Western Hemisphere on the Caribbean Island of Martinique in 2003, and has since spread to other islands including Dominica, Trinidad, and Guadeloupe. Wind currents and transport of infested plants and leaves are the mode of dispersion for this mite.

With the support of the Technical Working Group, PPQ will develop an action plan to respond to the threat posed by the red palm mite in Puerto Rico.

If you wish to receive additional details about this action, please contact Valerie DeFeo at (301) 734-3393.

/s/Richard L. Dunkle

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