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News Release

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USDA Announces Implementation of Multilateral Agreement to Combat Damaging Fruit Fly Species

*U.S., Guatemala and Mexico Reach Agreement to Suppress Mediterranean Fruit Fly and
other Species that Damage Agriculture Economies*



WASHINGTON, July 1, 2014 –The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that an agreement to strengthen the effort to keep the economically devastating Mediterranean Fruit (Medfly) and other fruit flies from threatening agricultural production in the United States, Guatemala, and Mexico will be implemented.

The central focus on the agreement, known as the MOSCAMED program, is the maintenance of a sterile Medfly barrier north of Chiapas, Mexico, and to gradually extend the barrier further into Guatemala, designed to keep the pest from infesting the United States. The buffer zone is created through the production and release of sterile flies and the development of natural parasites and organic bait sprays in this area. The Medfly is one of the world’s most destructive pests, infesting over 200 types of fruits and vegetables and making them unfit to eat. A permanent infestation in the United States would result in billions of dollars in losses to American agriculture.

“This new agreement will provide more tools to ensure these invasive species do not cause billions of dollars in damage to America’s agriculture economy,” said Ed Avalos, Undersecretary for USDA’s Marketing and Regulatory Programs. “I would like to express my gratitude to Guatemalan and Mexican officials for working with us to implement this new agreement.”

Although separate agreements have existed with Mexico and Guatemala for more than 30 years to maintain the Medfly barrier and manage this and other economically important fruit fly pests, the original agreements proved to be too narrow in scope. The new agreement will better address the program’s evolving needs for research in control, detection, and eradication techniques, which has become especially critical as other fruit fly threats have emerged.

The agreement creates a trilateral commission in Guatemala City under which all current and future fruit fly programs will operate. The agreement also mandates formation of a defined management structure, colocation of all government and program employees, and audits and periodical program assessments.

In addition to maintaining a sterile Medfly barrier, the MOSCAMED program produces and ships sterile Medflies from Guatemala to California and Florida as part of a preventative release program that protects the United States from accidental introductions of this pest. The program is also able to provide sterile Medflies to eradicate any outbreaks in the United States.

The MOSCAMED program also produces sterile Mexican fruit flies, commonly referred to as the Mexfly. Mexfly is another destructive pest of concern for the United States, and USDA is currently working on eradicating this pest from Texas and Northern Mexico along the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Some other important activities of the MOSCAMED program includes testing new mechanical and structural devices, validation of various commercial products, and conducting research on a wide variety of fruit flies.

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