GCSI Program Overview

Last Modified:
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GCSI Operational Plan

In 2017, the decision was made to transition from a 5-year Strategic Plan model to an Operational Plan which would result in the ability to quickly change programmatic priorities and direction, should the need arise.

- 2023 GCSI Operational Plan (186.79 KB)

The resulting GCSI Operational Plan goals, listed below, are in line with USDA, APHIS and PPQ goals and priorities.

- Early Warning System
- Harmonized Pest Exclusion and Safeguarding Strategy
- Emergency Response and Preparedness
- Communications Network
- Resources Strategies

GCSI Cross Functional Working Group

The APHIS GCSI Cross Functional Working Group (CFWG) is comprised of representatives of the PPQ Core Functional Areas (CFAs) of Pest Exclusion and Import Programs (PEIP), Field Operations (FO), and Science and Technology (S&T), as well as APHIS-International Services (IS). The CFWG's purpose is to strengthen and promote effective coordination and communication between these CFAs and work towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall coordination and strategy development of offshore safeguarding initiatives and activities in the Greater Caribbean Region.

CFWG activities include, but are not limited to:

- Provide guidance and direction relative to the APHIS GCSI Program
- Identify program needs
- Review and streamline operational processes and procedures
- Provide programmatic and funding suggestions pertinent to annual regional plant health safeguarding project submissions

GCSI Accomplishments

Greater Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative FY21 Regional Safeguarding Projects Accomplishments

The Greater Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative (GCSI), and our regional partner countries and organizations, successfully executed 10 plant health safeguarding projects in the Greater Caribbean Region (GCR) despite continued impacts and challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These projects contributed to strengthening and enhancing, collaborative mitigation and safeguarding efforts between the United States of America and GCR partner countries and organizations. Our collective efforts contributed to the improvement of safeguarding policy frameworks, the strengthening phytosanitary systems through

improved technologies, evaluation of the preparedness of countries in the event of an incursion of priority pests, and improved communication and networking systems for more effective and efficient information exchange among countries, regionwide. Our specific accomplishments include:

Greater preparedness of Caribbean Countries to respond to incursions from priority pests of importance to the Caribbean and the United States of America

Using the safeguarding capacity building tools developed in 2019 and 2020 under the GCSI, where twenty-one plant health professionals from six countries were trained in proper execution techniques to conduct tabletop simulation pest response exercises, similar tabletop simulation exercises were conducted in five countries with over one hundred stakeholders from the national emergency response systems participating. Specific areas for strengthening participating national emergency response programs were identified. These areas included technical training, information dissemination, development of strategies for improved stakeholder (public and private sectors) collaboration, and communication.

Improved Regional safeguarding systems for priority pest of mutual concern to the United States of America and the Caribbean

To enhance the capacity of countries to manage the information being collected from their national surveillance programs, a Regional Surveillance Data Management Tool was developed. This valuable tool provides standardized pest surveillance data capture across participating countries; online pest surveillance data for easier access and reporting; an alternative storage of pest surveillance data; and reporting capabilities to improve the capacity of countries to respond to emergency situations.

Updated Regional Priority Pest list for the GCR

Ten new priority pests were identified for the GCR by Key Regional Experts. The top three pests include Red Ring nematode, Fusarium *oxysporum fsp cubens* TR4 and *Ceratitis capitata/rosa*- Medfly., which are also included on the list of pests of mutual concern to the United States and the GCR, along with *Helicoverpa armigera,*

Ralstonia solanacearum Race 3 Biovar 2, and *Peronosclerospora philippinensis.* Additionally, this updated list provides pest priorities for which National Plant Protection (NPPOs} should include in their plant health programs. An additional accomplishment was the development of a journal publication "P*rioritization of Quarantine Pest List for the Greater Caribbean using a Multi Criteria Decision Approach*", which documents the methodology utilized for the development of the previous pest lists.

Efficient Fruit Fly monitoring system utilized Caribbean Countries

Eight countries used the region’ Fruit Fly Management System, with is a platform for the harmonized reporting of fruit fly survey data. This database system is of significant importance to the GCR, as it contributes to safeguarding the Region from these serious pest threats and can potentially reduce the impacts of introduction, economic damage, and spread of *Tephritid* fruit flies.

Greater access to relevant plant health information by Caribbean countries

The Caribbean Plant Health Directors (CPHD) Website and Facebook Page were successfully maintained and disseminated public outreach information, which contributed to an increased awareness of invasive species and the safeguarding efforts in the GCR. During the year, there was an average of ~10,000 visits and ~3,000 unique visits each month to the website.

Increased capacity building tools to assist Caribbean countries to comply with international reporting obligations through the enhancement of a digital tool for recordingnon-compliance issues

An online tool, which was originally developed by Center for Agriculture and Bioscience International `(CABI}, "*Caribbean Biosecurity Interceptions System*" (CBIS) was enhanced to assist with non-compliance reporting in the Region, and to support Risk Based Sampling considerations at the region’ ports of entry. The system was piloted in the Cayman Islands and Jamaica, with positive feedback and

the tool is now available to the CPHD Forum membership through a Sharing Portal on the CPHDForum.org Members website.

Successful Development and Piloting of an Online Regional Plant Quarantine (PQ) Course

The laboratory component of the online Regional PQ Course was successfully developed and implemented. The platform provides a general coverage of global phytosanitary issues, concepts related to phytosanitary import regulatory systems, through laboratory assignments to assess pest risk, pest identification techniques, as well as specialized, relevant regulatory inspection method training for seaports, airports, postal offices, and packaging houses environments. Twenty plant health professionals from ten countries completed the pilot of the Regional PQ Course, including the newly launched virtual laboratory component, which is now available, worldwide, as part of the University of the West Indies Open Campus program.

Successful hosting of the 14th meeting of the Caribbean Plant Health Directors Forum

The 14th annual meeting of the CPHD was held virtually, due to continued COVID-19 impacts. More than twenty (20) countries and seventeen (17) agencies attended this important regional meeting. Topics included updates on the work conducted under the GCSI, regional partners' work plans, and areas of collaboration in safeguarding and emerging issues that impact regional plant health systems. The highlight of the meeting was the endorsement and transfer of the Caribbean Biosecurity Interceptions System (CBIS), to the CPHD Forum, by the Caribbean Region’ Center for Bioscience International (CABI) representative.

Enhanced capacity to strengthen early warning systems for nematodes which have economic and quarantine significance to the Caribbean and the United States of America

Plant parasitic nematodes are of great economic significance to the GCR, and a virtual nematology training course "Diagnostics, Surveillance and Management for Economically Important Plant-Parasitic Nematodes" was designed, by one of our regional partner organizations – the University of Florida, and completed by 30 Plant

Health Professionals from 14 countries, resulting in enhanced capacity to safeguard their borders and manage crop losses due to economically important nematodes.

Focused Strategic Plan successfully developed to address priority plant health issues impacting the GCR

`Through a participatory and consultative process, a six-year strategic plan was developed for the CPHD Forum. The strategic plan reflects the CPHD team's concerns, environment, ambitions, and expectations. The Forum now has a framework which outlines the strategic pillars and the long-term objectives, key results, targets, and key activities, and will allow CPHD Forum member countries to address plant health issues in a more focused and systematic approach.

GCSI Regional Partner Organizations

Safeguarding plant health in an area as vast and culturally and politically diverse as the Greater Caribbean Region, is no easy feat, but the long-standing, strong partnerships the GCSI shares, in this dynamic and challenging region, make our collective accomplishments and successes possible.

The following is a listing, in no order, of our regional partner organizations, along with a link to their individual websites where you can find additional information:

- GCSI Regional Partner Organizations

Caribbean Pathway Analysis

A Caribbean Pathway Analysis was initially conducted in 2009, by APHIS-PPQ Plant Epidemiology and Risk Analysis Laboratory (PERAL), Science and Technology Branch. Since then, there have been several iterations with the last one produced in 2019. The objective of the pathway analysis was to contribute to an improved understanding of pathways for plant pest movement into and within the entire Greater Caribbean Region (GCR), and every revision listed human movement among

the highest risk for regional plant pest movement, as people moving between areas may carry pests on themselves, their clothing, or their shoes; transporting the pest on objects brought to an area (e.g., handicrafts made from plant parts), or by intentionally collecting the pest to take it to a different location.

- 2019 Review of the PERAL 2009 Greater Caribbean Region (GCR) Pathway Analysis (390.1 KB)

Regional Priority Pest List

In 2021, the Caribbean Plant Health Directors Forum, which includes 32 countries in the Greater Caribbean Region and a number of regional partner organizations, developed a priority pest list containing plant pests and diseases of concern to the GCR. This list was compared to the APHIS Objective Prioritization of Exotic Pest (OPEP) List, with 5 pest species being identified as mutual pests of concern to the Caribbean and the United States. This Caribbean Regional Priority Pest List (RPPL) comprises the target pests the GCSI Cross Functional Working Group utilizes when reviewing and ranking annual safeguarding project proposals and making funding support allocation suggestions. The current RPPL is:

- *Red ring nematode*
- *Fusarium oxysporum fsp cubens TR4*
- *Helicoverpa armigera*
- *Ralstonia solanacearum Race 3 Biovar 2*
- *Peronosclerospora philippinensis*

To provide increased safeguarding focus, pests that pose a serious threat to agriculture in the United States will also be included as target pests.

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