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Wednesday 11th December 2013, 13:24 GMT

## Plague threatens CR banana exports

Authorities in Costa Rica have ramped up efforts to deal with Boisduval scale and banana mealybugs



**C**osta Rica has declared a state of phytosanitary emergency in response to a spread of pest populations that is threatening the country's banana farms. The Ministry of Agriculture's State Phytosanitary Service (SFE) said Boisduval scale and banana mealybugs infestations affected 24,000ha of plantations in the country's Atlantic region from Talamanca to Sarapiquí.

Although the damage inflicted by these pests is largely cosmetic, resulting in

spots on the banana fingers, growers fear their fruit will be rejected in packhouses.

"The biggest risk is that our exports will be restricted, shipments returned and markets closed, which will have serious repercussions on the industry and affect the country's commercial standing," SFE service director Magda González said.

The state of emergency, which will last for a year, allows the authorities to increase imports of bags of Bifenthrin and Buprofezin which help

manage the effects of the infestation. The mitigation strategy also includes integrated management and biological pest control measures, SFE said.