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TR4: Colombian farms under quarantine



Suspected cases of potentially devastating fungus found on two farms, including one that has supplied Dole Organic

Latin America's first reported discovery of Tropical race 4 (TR4), the soil-borne fungus that can cause the potentially devastating Panama disease in Cavendish banana plants, looks to be a reality after documents posted on a Colombian government website apparently confirmed the news.

As first revealed by Fruitnet on 4 July, a suspected instance of TR4 was identified last month in La Guajira, a region in the far north of Colombia close to its border with Venezuela.

Since then, authorities in the country have refused to provide any detailed comment on the reports or indeed issue any kind of categorical denial

that TR4 might have been found – besides making statements about a lack of official confirmation and suggesting the whole episode might have been the result of confusion over the government's own disease prevention activities.

However, Fruitnet now understands that test results point to two practically certain cases of TR4 in La Guajira.

In the past 24 hours, two resolutions said to have been issued by the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) but then hastily removed from its website would appear to support that conclusion.

According to reports citing sources in Ecuador, those documents revealed the

names of two farms that have been quarantined due to the presence of symptoms associated with the fungus.

The first is apparently Eva Norte farm in Riohacha; the second is reported to be Don Marce, a key production centre close to the Tapias River 100km north-east of Santa Marta that has supplied organic-certified bananas to multinational fruit marketer Dole.

Fruitnet continues to invite representatives from ICA to comment on the case.