

Britain's favourite fresh produce magazine since 1895



By Carl Collen

Monday 6th January 2014, 14:29 GMT

## ***Panama disease warning issued***

An entry in the scientific journal *Nature* has called for concerted action to prevent the spread of the banana-killing disease



**A** joint report by Stephan Weise of Biodiversity International and Gert Kema of Wageningen University has raised concerns over the threat of Panama disease, which has the potential to devastate banana plantations across the globe.

Published in the scientific journal *Nature*, the report called for concerted action to prevent further dissemination of the disease, which has ravaged plantations in southeast Asia for years but has now also spread to Jordan and Mozambique.

Kema and Weise raised concerns over the apparent lack of funding made available to tackle the disease, which wiped out the Gros Michel banana variety in the 20th century at great economic cost.

This led to the deployment of the resistant Cavendish variety – which replaced Gros Michel and now dominates the global export trade – although a more aggressive strain of the *Fusarium* fungus (the cause of Panama disease) called TR4 is now impacting on Cavendish crops.

"I am incredibly concerned that it (TR4) will soon pop-up in Latin America," Kema explained.

The World Banana Forum, a multi-stakeholder platform of the banana industry whose Secretariat is hosted by the FAO, recently launched a TR4 Task Force to save the banana as the livelihoods and food security of millions of producers and small-holders are threatened.

Luud Clercx, from the TASTE Foundation (Technical Assistance for Sustainable Trade & Environment), coordinates the group and agrees that "Global efforts are urgently needed on training and capacity building to safeguard banana production."

Wageningen University coordinates several multidisciplinary public-private partnerships to combat Panama disease. But according to Kema, more action is needed: "Given the TR4 outbreaks, nothing is enough – more action is urgently required."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

© Copyright Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com 2014. The copyright on this article and all content published on Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com is held by Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com Limited, a joint venture between Market Intelligence Limited and Dr Rolf M Wolf Media GmbH. All rights reserved. Neither this article nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, including print-outs, screen grabs and information retrieval systems, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

**FRUITNET.COM**