

Mozambique's leading banana exporter has headed up talks in the African country as part of a strategic meeting to deal with Panama Disease Tropical Race 4 (TR4).



Representatives of Matanuska, the company most affected in Mozambique by the introduction of the banana fungus disease, has joined several key figures involved in the fight against TR4 in the meetings which began Wednesday and will continue today.

Unconfirmed reports have cited that up to 60 hectares of the Matanuska plantation is affected with scores of plants being destroyed. Precise details will become clearer following the two-day meeting.

Professor Altus Viljoen, of Stellenbosch University, South Africa, is one of the main advisors to the Matanuska project and has been working closely with the banana business since the disease first affected plantations in September 2013.

He told *www.freshfruitportal.com* the meetings would discuss various tactics on how to treat the disease, which currently has no effective cure.

"We are currently having an African strategy meeting in Stellenbosch to address the introduction of this fungus into the continent, and all important role players are

participating in the meeting," Viljoen said.

"This includes the managers and investors of Matanuska, country representatives throughout the continent, Asian colleagues that had been dealing with the disease for many years and research organizations in Africa."

According to its website, Matanuska Mocambique Limitada, which is part of the Rift Valley Group, had planned to have the first phase of its banana project completed by the end of 2015.

The initial stage would have established 2,500 hectares of banana plantations before expanding 'the number of cultivated hectares considerably'. However, how much the project has been jeopardized by the contamination remains to be seen.

Earlier this week, *www.freshfruitportal.com* reported how [major banana-producing regions are on alert following a warning from the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization \(FAO\)](#) on the frightening return of Panama Disease.

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