

A taskforce group set up to tackle problems with the potentially deadly Tropical Race 4 (TR4) strain of Panama Disease in an African banana plantation has shared its findings with [www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com) following its inaugural workshop. 

The meeting was convened by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and was attended by intergovernmental bodies, research institutions, trade organizations, government officials, plant protection experts, universities and producers with the mandate and expertise to curtail the introduction and further spread of the banana fungus TR4 in Mozambique.

The virus reached the African continent in 2013 when the Matanuska plantation declared an outbreak. The Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (Norfund), an investment group owned by the Norwegian Government, partly funds Matanuska.

TR4 has already been detected in three of the top 10 banana-growing countries - China, the Philippines and Indonesia - and there have also been outbreaks in Thailand, Malaysia and Australia.

As well as migrating to Mozambique it was also discovered in Jordan last year, adding to fears that it will transfer across the world.

Several important steps have been laid out in an official declaration by the taskforce workshop. They are:

- To fully develop and implement a continental strategy and prevent similar outbreaks elsewhere in Mozambique and the African continent.
- To provide and enhance technical capacity on the continent and to implement and monitor phytosanitary systems.
- Promoting greater use of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and other matters concerning plant health.
- Report and map new outbreaks of TR4 in Africa and member states and communicate information on new outbreaks, successful containment and prevention initiatives by means of a web portal.
- Recognize that TR4 is a continental issue that requires coordination and collaboration between partners by holding regular meetings.

- Provide training, raise awareness and monitor disease spread.
- Screen banana germplasm for TR4 resistance.
- Call upon African and international organizations to recognize and support the group by investing in research, awareness programs, human capacity and infrastructure development on the continent.
- Develop a regional Pest Risk Analysis document and set of phytosanitary measures to be enforced by Member States in order to prevent the introduction and spread of TR4 and other quarantine pests of bananas to areas where they do not yet occur.
- Encourage African governments to formulate legislation and implement required activities to protect the crops of vulnerable farm owners against destructive foreign pests.

"In Asia, the fungus has caused considerable damage to Cavendish bananas and certain locally grown varieties in all of the countries where it has been introduced," the report says.

Further meetings of the taskforce group will be held later this year.

Related story: [Mozambique Panama Disease talks to yield containment report](#)

[www.freshfruitportal.com](http://www.freshfruitportal.com)