

Mexican authorities claim a new norm for fighting Moko disease without methyl bromide will improve public health and disease control. 

In a release, the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) said the new Official Mexican Rule NOM-068-SAG/FITO-2015 aimed to update techniques for fighting the disease, modifying a rule that was implemented in 2000.

"The spread of this disease causes economic losses by reducing production and preventing the product's movement, and it also prevents the free trade of bananas from affected regions, both in domestic and export markets," SAGARPA said.

"The environmental conditions where bananas crops are grown favor the development and establishment of the pathogen that causes Moko disease, which is why it is necessary to strengthen phytosanitary measures in zones where it could be found, with the goal of mitigating the damages the disease causes, as well as protecting zones where it is not present."

The authority said the new rule eliminated the use of methyl bromide as it had been identified as an active substance responsible for the destruction of the ozone layer, adding that under the Montreal Protocol, Mexico had agreed to progressively reduce its application toward total prohibition.

"The new rule opens the possibility for other bacteria that show biological effectiveness, such as the use of alternative bactericides," SAGARPA said.

"The NOM updates the agronomic and phytosanitary management of bananas, to utilize more effective and efficient techniques for growing the crop.

"Also post-harvest conditioning techniques for the fruit have been improved to meet the demands of domestic and international markets."

According to Mexico's Agriculture and Food Information Service (SIAP), Mexico has 75,337 hectares of bananas planted, with the main growing states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz, Michoacán de Ocampo, Colima, Jalisco, Nayarit, Oaxaca and Guerrero producing 208,651 metric tons (MT) annually.

Of that amount, 135,457MT are destined for export markets.

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