

Film on Belize's Mediterranean fruit fly (Med fly) Programme Wins International Acclaim:

Film on shown at Codex Alimentarius Commission Meeting in Rome , Second Global Review on Aid for Trade and at the World Trade Organization Committee Meeting on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

At the June 2009 Meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, the Standard Trade and Development Facility (STDF) presented to Members a DVD film that featured the Mediterranean fruit fly (Med fly) Surveillance Programme in Belize. The main objective of the film is to sensitize Governments of the benefits that countries can obtain by investing at the national level in agricultural health and food safety. The film, which is being distributed to WTO member countries globally, was produced with the collaboration of BAHA, who in February 2009 coordinated all activities with the STDF so that the film crew from Rome could produce the Belize component on site in Belize. The film features all stakeholders involved in the entire med fly surveillance programme some of which include among others: farmers, packing house workers, Med fly Technicians, Members of the BAHA Senior Management Team, USDA/APHIS Representative, and the Belize Minister of Agriculture of Fisheries, Hon Rene Montero. The experiences of two other countries (Benin and Vietnam) are also shown in the film. One country report featured loss of market access to the European Union for fish and fishery products. This resulted from failure to invest in adequate laboratory facilities to provide the necessary food safety assurances and from lack of food safety measures being applied along the production to consumption food chain. The other country report focused on how the lack of the practice of good agricultural practices, food safety and other related activities, lead to the loss of export markets ,and decrease in consumer confidence in the local products, thereby creating a domino effect including loss of jobs and its attendant increase in poverty and other socio-economic problems.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) concluded that the Belize experience was the best demonstration of the clear benefits countries obtain by investing in Sanitary and Phytosanitary capacities. The WTO thus requested permission from the Belize Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade to show the film at the Second Global Review on Aid for Trade. The objective of the showing was to have donor agencies recognize the importance of providing technical and financial assistance to developing and least developed countries to enhance their sanitary and phytosanitary capacities.

The film was also shown to the more than 500 Delegates from over 120 countries and more than 30 international organisations attending the Codex Alimentarius Commission Meeting in Rome, Italy in which Belize also actively participates. The DVD film will be sent to all Missions of Members of the World Trade Organisation, all Codex Contact Points and will be available on the WTO website. The WTO will be using the film in its training programmes to increase awareness on sanitary and phytosanitary measures emphasizing the important role they play in allowing countries to access markets which provide the opportunity for increased returns.

The Belize Agricultural Health Authority on an annual basis represents Belize Internationally in the World Trade Organization Meetings on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures, as well as meetings of Codex Alimentarius, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. At these meetings major decisions are made on plant health, animal health, food safety and quarantine measures in international trade. These decisions are subsequently reflected in the daily services and programmes, that BAHA implements in Belize to safeguard agricultural health and food safety. Belize is respected as a leader among these international bodies for the caliber of its technical representatives and its active participation and contribution.

Copies of the DVD film which shows the importance of investing on sanitary (human and animal health, quarantine) and phytosanitary (plant health) capacity will soon be available from the Belize Agricultural Health Authority.

Additional information can be obtained from the Coordinator of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Enquiry Point, BAHA at 824-4899 or 824-4872.