

PLANT HEALTH - RELATED ACTIVITIES

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INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) is the institution mandated by the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to coordinate, harmonize, and strengthen sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures across the Region. Established in 2010, CAHFSA provides a unified regional mechanism through which Member States can collectively address plant health, animal health, and food safety challenges, improve regulatory coherence, and facilitate safe and efficient agricultural trade.

Operating under the broader governance framework of CARICOM, which includes 21 Member States and Territories, CAHFSA currently serves 17 full members along with several associate members. Of these, 15 are contracting parties to the International Plant Protection

Convention (IPPC), demonstrating the Region's strong commitment to adherence to international phytosanitary standards and active engagement in global plant health governance.

In 2018, CAHFSA was formally recognised as the Regional Plant Protection Organization (RPPO) for the Caribbean under Article IX of the IPPC. This designation, endorsed through review by the IPPC Technical Consultation and subsequently recommended to the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), mandates CAHFSA to coordinate phytosanitary activities among National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs). As the Caribbean RPPO, CAHFSA, promotes the harmonisation of phytosanitary measures, supports the development and implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs), facilitates technical information exchange, and strengthens regional cooperation on plant health and biosecurity.

Institutionally, CAHFSA's Secretariat has been restructured into five departments: Administration and Finance, Plant Health,

Animal Health, Food Safety, and Business Development. The RPPO functions are executed through the Plant Health Department, which is staffed by a dedicated technical team responsible for the core plant health functions.

CAHFSA continues to strengthen its regional and international impact through strategic partnerships, technical cooperation, and collaboration with organizations such as the IPPC Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and other global SPS and plant health institutions. Its work is grounded in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and aligned with the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO-SPS Agreement), ensuring that SPS measures in the Caribbean reflect international obligations while representing regional priorities.

UPDATES ON PLANT HEALTH-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Capacity Building Programmes and Activities

CAHFSA has made significant progress in strengthening Member States' food safety and SPS capacities to enhance export readiness and market access. This progress is reflected through expanded training initiatives, the hosting of regional SPS workshops, and active stakeholder engagement in the development of

harmonized guidelines and the assessment of national SPS systems to guide future action.

Pest Risk Analysis Training

CAHFSA, in collaboration with CAB International, provided Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) training for NPPO staff in the Caribbean and several Latin American countries. This blended training programme delivered modules virtually and culminated in an in-person workshop. At the end of the workshop, CAHFSA produced four draft pest risk analyses for organisms on its regional priority pest list. The RPPO is now finalising these PRAs.

Strengthening Grenada's Soursop Industry through Enhanced SPS Systems

CAHFSA, under a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with FAO support, funding from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), is executing activities under a regional project to strengthen Grenada's SPS systems in support of the country's soursop export industry. Valued at approximately USD 2.6 million annually and supporting over 2,600 farmers, the industry relies heavily on maintaining pest-free status for *Cerconota anonella* and *Bepratelloides cubense* to secure continued access to key markets, particularly the United States.

Under the Letter of Agreement (2024), which concludes in the third quarter of 2026, CAHFSA is delivering targeted

technical assistance and capacity-building support to Grenada to strengthen its national phytosanitary system. Interventions focus on enhancing pest surveillance programmes, reinforcing border inspection capacity, improving laboratory diagnostic capabilities, and establishing anticipatory action systems. Collectively, these measures are designed to strengthen early detection, preparedness, and rapid response mechanisms for priority quarantine pests, thereby safeguarding export market access and protecting the sustainability of Grenada's soursop industry.

Advocating for SPS: Initiatives to Foster Regional Unity and Cohesion

Strengthening the Framework for Intra-Regional Trade in Agricultural Products: CDB Grant Support to CAHFSA

CAHFSA is implementing a regional initiative, running from 2025 to 2027, funded by Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) grant under the Special Development Fund (SDF 10). The project aims to strengthen the framework for intra-regional trade in agricultural products by addressing long standing SPS barriers that limit the effectiveness of CARICOM's "25 by 2025" food security agenda.

In a Region where Borrowing Member Countries import 60–80% of their food and recently faced average food inflation exceeding 10%, fragmented and non-

harmonised SPS measures continue to raise compliance costs, disrupt supply chains, and restrict trade. Although 19 commodity-specific SPS guidelines were previously developed and endorsed in phase 1, Member States requested more prescriptive regional standards and stronger national SPS systems to eliminate ambiguity and facilitate trade.

In phase 2, this project is expected to streamline SPS compliance, reduce trade transaction costs, enhance food safety systems, and improve the Region's competitiveness and resilience. Through its four components, the initiative will develop harmonised regional SPS standards, pilot audits of national SPS systems particularly in countries connected to the proposed Southern Caribbean maritime corridor, deliver targeted capacity building for public and private stakeholders including women, youth, and vulnerable groups, and produce gender responsive communication tools.

Regional Trade Enhancement Mechanism for Agricultural Products Mechanism

In response to the mandate issued by the Conference of Heads of Government of the CARICOM and supported by the 115th Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED), CAHFSA has been working to establish a regional trade enhancement mechanism to facilitate safe and efficient trade in

agricultural products. In June 2025, CAHFSA developed a framework to support intra-regional trade and to guide food safety, sanitary, and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements for agricultural commodities.

A pilot phase, scheduled for the first quarter of 2026, will be conducted to assess compliance with trade requirements, identify prohibitive factors, build capacity, and begin resolving barriers to market access. This initiative represents a critical step toward harmonizing SPS measures and strengthening regional trade integration within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Caribbean Plant Health Directors' Forum and IPPC Regional Workshop for the Caribbean

From September 8–12, 2025, the Caribbean Plant Health Directors (CPHD) Forum hosted its Eighteenth (18th) Annual Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. The event, renamed the “Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Plant Protection Forum”, was held in conjunction with the IPPC Regional Workshop for the Caribbean. Over the course of five days, the meeting gathered more than sixteen (16) Plant Health Directors from member countries, as well as representatives from international and regional plant health organizations, research institutions, and academia.

This crucial regional event serves as a platform to align plant health guidelines

and strengthen phytosanitary systems. By focusing on technical and emerging issues, the meeting aimed to protect the region's agriculture and environment from plant pests and facilitate trade in plants and plant products.

Key meeting objectives included strengthening pest diagnostics networks, addressing major pest and disease threats, advancing ePhyto digital certification, and reviewing draft phytosanitary standards. The meeting aimed to generate actionable recommendations for regional governance bodies, enhance resource mobilization, and reinforce plant health security and food safety across the Caribbean through stronger collaboration among national and international stakeholders.

The Caribbean Week of Agriculture 2025

The Caribbean celebrated its 19th Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) from September 29th to October 02nd 2025, in St. Kitts and Nevis. During the week CAHFSA hosted the annual CAHFSA Symposium under the theme: “*Building Resilient Markets: Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Compliance as a Business Advantage*”

This theme reinforced CAHFSA's commitment to advancing the “25 by 2025 and beyond” regional goal of transforming agri-food systems toward sustainability, focusing on soil health, water conservation, biodiversity, and climate

financing. The symposium featured technical sessions on strengthening food control systems, promoting food authenticity testing, enhancing laboratory capabilities, and advancing SPS compliance as a driver of trade and private-sector competitiveness all aimed at building resilience and trust in Caribbean agricultural markets.

COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE AREA OF AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Collaboration with the GICSV and the TC-RPPO

CAHFSA actively supports the international and hemispheric phytosanitary community through coordinated efforts to prevent the entry and spread of plant pests.

The Agency continued its collaboration with the Inter-American Coordinating Group in Plant Health (GICSV), a hemispheric forum that coordinates and promotes cooperation in plant protection. GICSV was established to promote joint actions to prevent pest introductions and spread on plants, plant products, and other regulated commodities, and to encourage the adoption of suitable control measures. In May 2025, CAHFSA assumed the role of GICSV Coordinator for the period 2025-2027

Over the past four months, the GICSV organised meetings of the working groups on FoC TR4, Phytosanitary Emergencies, Electronic Certificates, Locust and Fruit flies. On 14 October, the Phytosanitary Emergency TWG organised a webinar to share experience on approaches to building stronger, more adaptive plant health systems that can effectively prevent, prepare for, and respond to phytosanitary emergencies across the Americas and the Caribbean.

The 37th Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organisations (TC-RPPOs) occurred in Bangkok, Thailand, from 21 to 25 September 2025. CAHFSA, the RPPO for the Caribbean, participated in the meeting and provided updates on its Plant Health activities.

CAHFSA's Participation in Strengthening Food Safety Systems: IICA/EU SPS Measures Project

CAHFSA continues to support IICA in executing activities under the European Union (EU) Food Security Programme for the Caribbean. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Action aims to address key SPS barriers affecting agricultural and fishery trade across the region. The initiative focuses on strengthening regional regulatory frameworks, enhancing public and private sector capacities, and improving laboratory systems to support compliance with international standards.

Work is advancing on developing regional model regulations and specific commodity regulations to facilitate safer, more efficient trade, with consultants engaged to commence implementation in Q4 2025/Q1 2026. Targeted training programmes are being designed to build public sector capacity to support private stakeholders' food safety compliance better. In addition, consultants have been selected to lead laboratory rationalisation efforts, aimed at improving testing capacity and harmonisation, with activities expected to begin in Q4 2025. The application of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) Tool is also underway in Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, providing valuable assessments to guide future SPS capacity development.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Pest Prioritisation Training

The CPHD Regional Priority Pest List (RPPL) Safeguarding Sub-Working Group, presented its 2024 report highlighting key achievements under CAHFSA's technical capacity-building agenda. In 2024, the RPPL Committee completed its fifth biennial pest prioritisation exercise using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to systematically evaluate more than 100 pest threats across entomology, plant pathology, and weed science. This evidence-based assessment resulted in a

prioritised list of 33 organisms, with the top-ranked pests including *Ceratitidis capitata* (Mediterranean fruit fly), *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* TR4, and *Trogoderma granarium* (khapra beetle).

The 2025–2026 work programme focuses on strengthening regional plant health security through increased public awareness, regional pest risk analysis training, and ongoing refinement of prioritisation methodologies. Recognising gaps in national implementation, the RPPL Technical Working Group (TWG) has identified the need to retrain Member States in the development and updating of National Regulatory Pest Lists.

To support this, CAHFSA will deliver comprehensive Pest Prioritisation Training in the second quarter of 2026, aimed at strengthening national capacity to prepare, revise, and formally submit regulatory pest lists. These interventions will enhance evidence-based decision-making, support more strategic allocation of limited resources, and reinforce the Caribbean's plant health security architecture against high-impact pest threats.

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