

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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**Date:** 1/6/2012

**GAIN Report Number:**

## Costa Rica

**Post:** San Jose

### **EMP-TIRF-Funded Fumigation Training Facilitating Trade between the**

**Report Categories:**

Export Accomplishments - Events

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**Report Highlights:**

Fumigation training for eight Central American Countries resulted in a reduction from 17 rejected containers of U.S. fruits and vegetables in 2010 to only one rejected container in 2011.

**General Information:**

Fumigation training for eight Central American countries was carried out using support money from EMP-TIRF to pay for two Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) experts to train quarantine technicians in Costa Rica. This activity addressed a lack of technical knowledge in fumigation techniques that resulted in rejected shipments. The training was just in time to prepare quarantine teams for the high season for imports of high-value fruits and vegetables.

In 2010, poor fumigation practices resulted in over 17 containers or \$750,000 in high-value U.S. fruit and vegetable shipment rejections at ports in Costa Rica alone. In December 2010, after extensive negotiations with APHIS-IS, Costa Rica finally agreed to begin using fumigations on agricultural commodities intercepted with quarantine pests. However, this agreement was vulnerable, since according to the Costa Rican Quarantine Department, they had identified serious deficiencies that needed to be addressed in order to continue using fumigation as a viable method for allowing commodities intercepted with quarantine pest to enter the country.

The overall objective of this activity was to address the identified deficiencies and train fumigation technicians from all eight countries on better fumigation practices and technique, thus improving market access for U.S. high value fruits and vegetables and also reducing U.S. agricultural commodity loses from the lack of or improper fumigations at the ports in Central America.

Specific objectives of the training were two fold. The first goal was to teach APHIS/PPQ fumigation techniques to Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) and Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) quarantine inspectors in order to improve quarantine inspection services at ports. The second was to get Costa Rica to fumigate containers, as opposed to rejecting them, if a quarantine pest is intercepted.

FAS/San Jose worked with APHIS to identify the problem clearly and what would be an appropriate way to address the training needs. FAS/San Jose received EMP-TIRF support for the proposed project, which was used to pay for the two APHIS trainers. OIRSA provided fumigation equipment and meeting space and was able to pay for participants to attend; the MAG supported its inspectors to attend. This was the first time quarantine fumigation training was offered outside of the United States. The training consisted of two days of classroom instruction using the APHIS quarantine fumigation manual to work through paper exercises on PPQ methods and a one day simulation exercise where participants built a fumigation chamber and practiced fumigating pallets of boxes. OIRSA paid for 20 participants from Belize, Dominican Republic, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador to join the training. MAG supported 22 of its own quarantine inspectors to participate and the Vice-Minister of Agriculture hosted the closing ceremonies.

Already the fruits of this \$3,824 investment are being harvested. Since this training took place, a container of apples from Washington State was stopped in October, valued at roughly \$50,000. Initially, MAG rejected the container, but after working with APHIS and FAS to coordinate a loan of equipment from OIRSA, the shipment was fumigated and the apples were allowed into the country. Additionally, this training and collaboration has initiated an improvement in the quarantine procedures of Costa Rica. Previously, MAG would issue a notification of rejection and the importer would have to formally request MAG to fumigate. Now MAG fumigates the shipment automatically if there is a viable

treatment option.

In the high season of 2011, only one container was rejected, compared to 17 rejected containers in 2010. The fruit and vegetable industry could not have resolved this problem without federal funding to supply APHIS officials to execute the training. Successful implementation of better fumigation techniques improves market access for U.S. fruits and vegetables to Central America; 2010 exports of fruit reached \$85 million, and vegetables, \$15 million.