

FOR INFORMATION

DA-2007-25

July 24, 2007

SUBJECT: Detections of Panicle Rice Mite, *Steneotarsonemus spinki*, in Brazoria County, Texas

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On July 13, 2007, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the detection of panicle rice mite (PRM), *Steneotarsonemus spinki*, at a rice research facility in Alvin, Brazoria County, Texas. This facility is operated by a private entity, where it conducts hybrid rice research. Since the initial detection within a greenhouse at the facility, additional positive PRM detections have occurred at three other greenhouses and five rice fields at the research facility.

This outbreak is considered to be transient, actionable, and under surveillance; therefore, APHIS and the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) are conducting ongoing surveys to delimit this infestation on the grounds of the facility, which consist of approximately 100 acres of rice planted in various fields. APHIS and TDA are also assessing the surrounding rice acreage that is in close proximity to the research facility. Early estimates indicate that Brazoria County may have approximately 16,000 acres of rice production.

APHIS has issued Emergency Action Notifications to stop movement of all rice seed, rice plants and plant parts, and farm equipment from the affected greenhouses and fields. A trace-back and trace-forward investigation is underway to determine the means of this pest's introduction at this research facility. This investigation includes all foreign sources of rice seed that has been imported into the facility. Managers of the research facility are being fully cooperative in this investigation.

In addition, APHIS has established a technical working group of experts to discuss survey and control strategies in response to PRM. The group will continue to meet on a regular basis to address this developing situation and consider mitigation strategies.

The PRM is considered a serious rice pest in China, Philippines, and Taiwan, where it has caused substantial crop losses. Yield losses can range from 30 to 90 percent. In 1997, the pest was detected in the Caribbean region where it is now known to affect Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. In 2002, the mite was reported in Costa Rica and Nicaragua and, in 2005, in Colombia. Recent reports also indicate its presence in Mexico. Interceptions of this pest have been reported at greenhouses in Ohio and Texas during the last 10 years. There are two main reported hosts of RPM, Rice, *Oryza sativa*, and the weedy red rice, *Oryza latifolia*.

For additional details on the Federal response to the detection of PRM, you may contact Phil Mason, Regional Program Manager, at (970) 494-7565 or Valerie DeFeo, Staff Officer, at (301) 734- 4387.

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