**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 724 / NW783E**

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:**

**Ms A Steyn (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

**QUESTION:**

(1) What plant protection mechanisms has his department put in place to (a) ensure effective surveillance, (b) early detection and (c) prevention of (i) plant diseases and (ii) invasive plant pests;

(2) what (a) plant diseases and (b) plant pests has his department detected through its (i) surveillance and (ii) early detection mechanisms in the past three financial years? **NW783E**

**REPLY:**

1. **(a) & (b)** The DAFF Plant Health Early Warning Systems Division was started in 2004 with the aim to develop surveillance programs and contingency plans for the early detection of and response to plant pests that might enter the country. Pest surveillance and detection can only be achieved through species specific programs as each pest program must be adapted according to the pest biology and the diagnostic procedures involved for positive identification. Pest risk assessment, consideration of global importance and spreading tendencies, as well as prioritisation form a critical part in the development of pest specific programs. Plant Health awareness and legislation regarding pest notification also play an important role in early detection. Hence the unit Plant Health Awareness in the Directorate Food Import and Export Standards, and the Division Policies Norms and Standards in the Directorate Plant Health, were formed. The Directorate Inspection Services, the third component of the NPPO, deals with operational regulatory matters relating to imports, exports and national control of the movement of plant commodities and so also with the operational surveillance actions and sampling of plant commodities for pest detection. The pest Diagnostic laboratories within Inspection Services have experts to ensure pest identification is done according to internationally excepted standards and protocols and to verify pest identification.

Researchers, producers and the general public are often the first to observe new pests in an area which they then report to DAFF through the channels provided. The Control Measures R110 of the Agricultural Pests Act, 1983 (Act No. 36 of 1983) have been amended to include a measure for compulsory notification of regulated pests. The Plant Health Early Warnings component has also developed the South African Emergency Plant Pest Response Plan to provide a general plan to deal with new plant pest outbreaks. Directorate Plant Health has developed and maintains several forums and working groups with the agricultural industry with different commodity groups to identify and develop contingency plans for priority regulated pests as well as to respond to new imminent pest threats to South Africa that may be associated with trade. One such group is the technical Phyto Risk Forum which meets once a quarter.

**(c)** Prevention of plant diseases and invasive plant pest is not 100% achievable given the biological nature of such pest and diseases. However, a dedicated Pest Risk Analysis unit in Directorate Plant Health was established in 2004 which deals with the risk assessment of plant pests associated with the importation of plant commodities into the country. The unit also develops phytosanitary import permit conditions to ensure trading partners receive technically justified import requirements which safeguard the local industries against quarantine pests but also allows trade. Directorate Inspection Services ensures that plant commodities that enter through an official port of entry comply with the above import conditions. Diagnostic samples from such consignments are referred to the DAFF’s diagnostic laboratories.

Through the ongoing interactive program with industry and action groups established in 2015 with the potato and tomato industry and a surveillance service provider, the pest Tuta absoluta (tomato Leafminer) was detected for the first time in South Africa in late August 2016. Through a pest surveillance program to detect Citrus greening, Candidatus Liberibacter africanus was detected in several new areas within South Africa

**(2) (a) and (b) (ii)** The following pests were reported to DAFF as a result of the implementation of pest awareness programmes, Control Measures and import conditions.

**a.** Pest known to occur in South Africa but under national control, detected in new areas:

• Aster Yellows Phytoplasma

• Ralstonia solanacearum

• Tilletia indica (Karnal bunt of wheat)

b. New pests reported in South Africa

• A new yet unidentified Cerambicidae sp (sugarcane borer)

• Acalitus essigi

• Acalitus vaccinia

• Banana Bunchy Top virus

• Brevipalpus lewisi

• Macruropyxis fulva sp. nov

• Raoiella indica

• Spodoptera frugiperda (Fall Armyworm)

c. New pests reported and managed as a result of import interceptions due to import inspections on plant commodities

• Aculus sp.

• Aonidomytilus albus

• Aphis forbesi

• Bactrocera dorsalis

• Brevipalpus italian sp. nov. (Trombidiformes:Tenuipalpidae)

• Brevipalpus sp.

• Diptacus cf. gigantorhynchus

• Monilinia fructicola

• Tenuipalpidae

• Tilletia controversa