

Press release Wageningen University & Research and Chiquita Brands International, 23 July 2018

## **Chiquita and Wageningen University & Research support a global scientific congress to combat Panama disease TR4**

**Panama disease or Fusarium wilt of banana is caused by a soil-dwelling fungus that causes plants to wither and die. The Tropical Race 4 (TR4) attacks the most widely cultivated Cavendish banana as well as many other banana species. Bananas are among the most important food crops and subsistence foods worldwide. Thus, concerted action is required to halt the spread of TR4.**

Chiquita is helping to bring leading scientists, researchers, industry players and institutions together to address this impending threat. On the 28th of July 2018 scientists from around the world will meet in Boston to discuss the current status of R&D and how TR4 can be dealt with. This will be the first global scientific exchange on the subject, bringing together approximately 100 specialists in this area. Fifteen speakers will share their findings and participants will debate the way forward.

### **No effective treatment**

As part of the International Congress of Plant Pathology (ICPP) in Boston focussing on Plant Life in a Global Economy this event will be led by Professor Gert Kema from Wageningen University & Research, The Netherlands and Prof. André Drenth, University of Queensland, Brisbane, two leaders in the field of banana research. The aim is to find a permanent solution to the scourge of TR4. Currently there is no effective treatment for TR4 once it has infected a banana plant. The only counter measure is to prevent the transfer of infested soil, infected plants and contaminated materials to clean areas.

### **Permanent and sustainable solution**

The opening address at the congress will be made by Andrew Biles from Chiquita. In supporting this event Chiquita seeks to facilitate debate by bringing together research experts from around the world to share their thoughts and expertise. Andrew says: "In our globally connected world TR4 knows no boundaries. The spread of the disease, mainly in the East, is well documented by the FAO. It is indiscriminate and effects farms small and large, rich and poor. It is our desire to assist in finding an enduring solution to this threat for all the banana industry. Banana production will not cease but could be significantly impaired. It is now time to act together."

Chiquita hopes this will be one of the many steps taken by industry on the way to finding a permanent solution for the effective management of TR4 to ensure healthy banana production for many years to come.

### **About Chiquita Brands International**

Chiquita is a leading global produce company employing 20,000 people across 25 countries. Serving nearly 70 countries, Chiquita provides consumers and customers with the highest quality of fruit and service, making Chiquita the banana of choice. Chiquita helps create a positive impact by implementing the principles of sustainability in all its business practices under the "Behind the Blue Sticker" initiative. Starting in the 1990s, Chiquita was the pioneer in promoting good farming practices and continues to help protect the environment and support farming communities by working under better-than-industry standard agricultural work practices. Chiquita bananas are fat-free and cholesterol-free and are a great source of potassium and vitamins. For more information about Chiquita, visit their website at [www.chiquita.com](http://www.chiquita.com).

### **About Wageningen University & Research**

In 2018, Wageningen University & Research will celebrate 100 years of existence. Focusing on the mission 'To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life', we combine fundamental and applied knowledge in order to contribute to resolving important questions in the domain of healthy food and living environment. Our 6,500 employees and 10,000 students are inspired by nature, society, and technology and tackle the issues with an open and curious perspective. This inspiration has enabled us to be amazed, develop knowledge, and apply this knowledge internationally for a century, which we also like to call '100 years of Wageningen Wisdom & Wonder.' [www.wur.eu](http://www.wur.eu)

### **NOTE FOR THE EDITOR**

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