



REPORT

**WORKSHOP ON MITIGATION OF SOUTH AMERICAN LEAF BLIGHT
(SALB) OF RUBBER IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

17 - 21 OCTOBER 2016 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

SUMMARY REPORT

South American leaf blight (SALB) is the most destructive disease of rubber. The disease is presently found in the American tropic with Mexico in the North and Brazil in the South. The disease has a high potential to establish in the Asia Pacific rubber growing countries due to the similar climate, increased in agricultural trade and advancement in intercontinental air transport. This workshop was held pursuant to the agreement in the 29th Session of the APPPC meeting in Bali, Indonesia to update the progress on the prevention of SALB incursion and discussed on the future action plan to strengthen the capacity especially in mitigating SALB pathways of non-rubber agricultural products by utilizing international standard on pest free area of production.

The regional workshop was attended by 25 participants from 11 countries. In the welcoming remarks, Dr Piao Yongfan informed that APPPC have organized several workshops in relation to this disease and publish three (3) important documents to support capacity building of the NPPO in preventing the incursion of the disease. The Director General of Agriculture in officiating the workshop, acknowledged the importance of mitigating SALB since about 93% of the world natural rubber is produced in the region. He also encouraged the participants to develop a collaborative network between the rubber growing countries in protecting the rubber industry from SALB in the region. At the end of the opening session, Dr Piao Yongfan and Mr. Yusof Othman briefed the meeting on the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific initiative on One Health (OH) framework to support biosecurity, biosafety, food security and environmental health in the region, and SALB is one of the projects that in line with the OH initiative.

The workshop discussed on the status of SALB in the endemic countries and the control measures adopted to control the disease. However, the current control measures are ineffective or too costly to be implemented. Thus, the prevention of incursion is still the most cost-effective method for the region to protect the rubber industry from collapse. With the increase in the importation of non-rubber agriculture products from the SALB endemic countries to the region has posed a higher risk of SALB incursion. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss the approaches to reduce the risk of the importation through the establishment of pest free area (PFA) of production, pest free place of production and pest free production sites. Several International Standard on Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) related to the implementation and recognition of pest free area were presented, and breakout groups to discuss the establishment, maintenance, auditing and reporting of PFA were also conducted. Initial discussion on standard operating procedure on establishment and maintenance of PFA was discussed and this SOP could be used as reference in the trade negotiation with the SALB endemic countries.

The country presentation on the achievement and future action plan showed that substantial progress has been implemented, such as all the rubber growing countries have listed SALB as one of the quarantine diseases in their legislation/regulation. Most of the countries have conducted advocacy, awareness and training programme to the quarantine staff and public, translated SALB training materials to local language, built diagnostic capacity to identify SALB on imported commodities and conducted specific survey for pests and diseases of rubber including detection of SALB. These activities are crucial for preventing the incursion. However, the level of achievement of certain countries showed

certain gaps that need to be addressed such as conducting PRA on non-rubber agriculture products imported from SALB endemic countries, training of new and young officers in plant quarantine since the senior officers are retiring and diagnostic capacity to identify SALB. The meeting agreed to explore a diagnostic training that will be held in Guatemala in 2017 to replace Brazil. Malaysia as the Chairman of the SALB working group will engage with the Malaysian Rubber Board and Guatemala NPPO in planning the training workshop.

There were several recommendations during the future action plan discussion including training for plant quarantine and technical officers on identification and surveillance; encourage NPPO to publish materials in local language for public awareness; revise and update document related to *Microcyclus ulei*, develop and improve protocol for diagnostic particularly in identification using molecular technique; and formulate criteria in conducting risk assessment for importation of commodities from SALB endemic countries. The workshop also acknowledged the availability of facilities at the Indonesia Quarantine Training Centre located in Bekasi which can be utilized for future regional training.

