

Sagarpa's *Cactoblastis cactorum* National Campaign and Survey Activities

Javier Trujillo-Arriaga, Héctor Manuel Sánchez-Anguiano and Arturo Bello-Rivera

Dirección General de Sanidad Vegetal – SENASICA – SAGARPA

Guillermo Pérez Valenzuela No. 127, Del Carmén Coyoacán, C.P 04100, México, D.F

Due to the presence of the cactus moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum*) in the Caribbean and its arrival in Florida in 1989 and taking into account the history of this species in Australia where it effectively returned 25 million hectares on land covered in invasive *Opuntia* back to farmers in Australia and 1 million hectares in South Africa, Mexico implemented a Preventative Survey Campaign in 2002 with the objectives of prevention and/or early detection of the arrival of this pest into the Mexican territory.

Nopales, as an agricultural commodity, are extremely important in Mexico; the total surface area dedicated to *Opuntia* cultivation is estimated to be 150,000 hectares for fodder, 60,000 ha for fruit (tunas), 10,500 ha for production of tender pads used as vegetables (nopalitos) and 100 ha destined to support of *Dactylopius* mealybugs that produce natural dye. The estimated production value per year is \$1,600 million pesos. In addition, natural lands populated by *Opuntia* species in Mexico are estimated to encompass 3 million hectares. Mexico has been recognized as the center of endemism for cacti in this genus having more than 100 endemic species.

Given the importance of *Opuntia* cultivation in Mexico, *Cactoblastis cactorum* is considered a economically important quarantine pest in our country. As a consequence, a National Survey Campaign for early detection of cactus moth operates in 20 Mexican states where survey activities are routinely conducted in *Opuntia* commercial plantations that cover 60,000 ha as well as in 8,000 fixed survey sites located in strategic locations in natural lands that have *Opuntia*.

Due in large part to the actions of this National Campaign, in August of 2006 we detected an infestation of *C. cactorum* in Isla Mujeres, Quintana Roo, Mexico. Immediately SAGARPA-DGSV implemented actions to control and eradicate the infestation. Preliminary results appear extremely promising and suggest possible eradication of this pest that threatens Mexican cacti.

Simultaneous to survey and monitoring efforts, outreach and capacity building activities, the Mexican Government is working with other National and International Institutions in search of novel and feasible control and eradication tactics for this pest.