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INTRODUCTION TO SYMPOSIUM ON BANANA NEMATODES [INTRODUCCION AL SIMPOSIO SOBRE NEMATODOS DEL BANANO]

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According to an FAO report, on a global basis the annual banana exports amount to 6 million tons with 8 million forecast for 1975. This establishes bananas as the most important fresh fruit in international trade. The annual foreign exchange earnings are around US $550 - $600 million, which ranks bananas as one of the 5 or 6 most valuable agricultural exports of tropical countries. In 1973 it accounted for 85% of world exports. This in itself gives some idea of this crop's importance to the economics of the banana-growing areas.

Unlike bananas, plantains are grown mainly for local consumption. Latin America produces most of these with Colombia having the largest production (2,000,000 tons) followed by Ecuador with about 800,000 tons. It is considered to be a major food source in several tropical countries.

It is therefore important that our organization considers the importance of nematodes in the production of this crop and the methods available to us for control.

VARIETAL RESPONSES AND PROSPECTS FOR BREEDING NEMATODE RESISTANT BANANA VARIETIES [RESPUESTAS DE VARIEDADES Y LAS PROBABILIDADES PARA LA PRODUCCION DE VARIEDADES DE BANANOS RESISTENTES A NEMATODOS]

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ABSTRACT

Diploid, triploid and tetraploid banana clones were evaluated for response to attack by *Radopholus similis* and *Helicotylenchus multicinctus*. The cultivated diploid clone 'Sikuzani' was marginally less susceptible to these nematodes than 2 other diploids. Tetraploid A was significantly less susceptible than 2 commercial triploids and tetrapolid C in a greenhouse test carried out with mixed nematode populations in Jamaica, but not in a field trial in St. Lucia. The first requirement in developing a banana breeding programme for nematode resistance will be to locate a suitable source of resistance in wild varieties.

INTRODUCTION

The literature contains several references to varying reactions of Cavendish varieties and 'Gros Michel' (*Musa* AAA) to banana nematodes (3, 6, 7). Some of these records may be confused by the existence of races of *Radopholus similis*