



Media Alert

■
For Immediate Release

To: All Media

Date: 13 November 2018

Attention: News Editors / Agricultural writers

Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) identified in parts of KwaZulu Natal

Pretoria: The Agricultural Research Council (ARC) has identified the Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) in some parts of KwaZulu Natal banana plantations. The disease gets its name from the bunchy appearance of infected plants. The BBTV can be transmitted through banana aphids, *Pentalonia nigronervosa* and through infected banana planting material.

Prior to the identification of BBTV in South Africa, the virus was first detected in neighbouring Zambia and Mozambique. This new infection in KwaZulu Natal raises concerns for South Africa's Banana growers and consumers. Early detection of further infections is crucial to prevent crop losses.

Bananas are an important part of fruits produced and consumed in South Africa; and, if left uncontrolled the virus could spread to other banana growing parts of the country, with dire consequences for the industry and our economy. South Africa is an importer and exporter of bananas. Any further spread of the virus could devastate the banana industry, currently valued at R1,9 billion with more than 100 000 jobs!

Control measures for the disease include farmers scouting for banana plants with symptoms on plantations, removal of infected plants and control of the banana aphids. Teams comprised of the ARC in partnership with government, led by Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and farmers (commercial and smallholder) are working to curb the spread of the disease to other regions.

ARC CEO Dr Shadrack Moephuli assures banana producers that, "The ARC is hard at work jointly with the DAFF to combat the spread of the virus threatening banana productions for both commercial and smallholder farmers. We are carrying out surveys in collaboration with DAFF around Komatipoort and Kiepersol. These surveys will be extended to other banana growing regions of South Africa. The ARC is also closely monitoring the situation in KwaZulu Natal to determine the spread of the disease."

Ends

Issued by:

ARC Marketing and Communications

Media inquiries

Ms. Mpho Ramosili

Senior Manager: Marketing and Communications

Tel: 012 427 9905

Cell: 066 475 6885

E-mail: ramosilim@arc.agric.za

Notes to the Editors

About the Agricultural Research Council

The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital and fosters innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The ARC provides diagnostic, laboratory, analytical, agricultural engineering services, post-harvest technology development, agrochemical evaluation, consultation and advisory services, food processing technology services as well as various surveys and training interventions. For more information visit the ARC website at www.arc.agric.za



Sello Tshipi

Public Relations Officer
1134 Park Street, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0083
P O Box 8783, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 427 9981
Cell: +27 73 498 6722
Email: TshipiA@arc.agric.za
URL: <http://www.arc.agric.za>
