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Commodity risk assessment of *Momordica charantia* fruits from Honduras

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Abstract

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to prepare and deliver risk assessments for commodities listed in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 as 'High risk plants, plant products and other objects'. Momordica fruits originating from countries where *Thrips palmi* is known to occur qualify as high risk plants. This Scientific Opinion covers the introduction risk for *T. palmi* posed by fruits of *Momordica charantia* L. imported from Honduras, taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by the National Service of Agrifood Health and Safety (SENASA) of Honduras. The risk mitigation measures proposed in the technical dossier from Honduras were evaluated taking into account the possible limiting factors. An expert judgement is given on the likelihood of pest freedom taking into consideration the potential pest pressure in the field, the risk mitigation measures acting on the pest in the field and in the packinghouse, including uncertainties associated with the assessment. For *T. palmi* on *M. charantia* fruits from Honduras, an expert judgement is given on the likelihood of pest freedom following the evaluation of the risk mitigation measures acting on *T. palmi*, including any uncertainties. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated, with 95% certainty that between 9,406 and 10,000 *M. charantia* fruits per 10,000 will be free from *T. palmi*.

Keywords: European Union, plant health, plant pest, quarantine, *Thrips palmi*, *Momordica charantia*, bitter gourd, bitter melon, melon thrips

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Terms of Reference as provided by European Commission

1.1.1. Background

The new Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031,[1] on the protective measures against pests of plants, has been applied from December 2019. Provisions within the above Regulation are in place for the listing of 'high risk plants, plant products and other objects' (Article 42) on the basis of a preliminary assessment, and to be followed by a commodity risk assessment. A list of 'high risk plants, plant products and other objects' has been published in Regulation (EU) 2018/2019.[2] Scientific opinions are therefore needed to support the European Commission and the Member States in the work connected to Article 42 of Regulation (EU) 2016/2031, as stipulated in the terms of reference.

1.1.2. Terms of reference

EFSA is expected to prepare and deliver risk assessments for commodities listed in the relevant Implementing Act as "High risk plants, plant products and other objects". Article 42, paragraphs 4 and 5, establishes that a risk assessment is needed as a follow-up to evaluate whether the commodities will remain prohibited, removed from the list and additional measures will be applied or removed from the list without any additional measures. This task is expected to be on-going, with a regular flow of dossiers being sent by the applicant required for the risk assessment.

In view of the above and in accordance with Article 29 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002, the Commission asks EFSA to provide a scientific opinion in the field of plant health for *Momordica charantia* fruits from Honduras taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical dossier provided by Honduras.

1.2. Interpretation of the Terms of Reference

The EFSA Panel on Plant Health (hereafter referred to as 'the Panel') was requested to conduct a commodity risk assessment of *Momordica charantia* fruits from Honduras following the Guidance on commodity risk assessment for the evaluation of high-risk plant dossiers (EFSA PLH Panel, 2019).

As stated in the EU implementing regulation 2018/2019, fruits of *Momordica* L. are known to host and provide a significant pathway for the introduction and establishment of the pest *Thrips palmi* Karny, which is known to have the potential to have a major impact on plant species which are of a major economic, social or environmental importance to the Union territory. However, this pest does not occur in all third countries nor in all areas within a third country where it is known to occur. Certain third countries also have effective mitigation measures in place for that pest. In view of this, fruits of *Momordica* L. that originate in third countries or parts thereof where *T. palmi* is known to occur and which lack effective mitigation measures for *T. palmi,* qualify as high-risk plants, within the meaning of Article 42(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/2031, and therefore, the introduction into the Union of those plants should be provisionally prohibited. Where demand for the importation of these plant products is identified, a risk assessment will be carried out in accordance with an implementing act to be adopted pursuant to Article 42(6) of Regulation (EU) 2016/2031.

Based on the information provided in the dossier, the panel will make an assessment to evaluate if the mitigation measures against *T. palmi* on *M. charantia* fruits from Honduras are effective to substantiate pest freedom. When necessary, additional information was requested to the applicant.

Risk management decisions are not within EFSA's remit. Therefore, the Panel provided a rating based on expert judgement regarding the likelihood of pest freedom for *T. palmi* given the risk mitigation measures proposed by the applicant.

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[1] Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament of the Council of 26 October 2016 on protective measures against pests of plants, amending Regulations (EU) 228/2013, (EU) 652/2014 and (EU) 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directives 69/464/EEC, 74/647/EEC, 93/85/EEC, 98/57/EC, 2000/29/EC, 2006/91/EC and 2007/33/EC. OJ L 317, 23.11.2016, pp. 4–104.

[2] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 of 18 December 2018 establishing a provisional list of high risk plants, plant products or other objects, within the meaning of Article 42 of Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 and a list of plants for which phytosanitary certificates are not required for introduction into the Union, within the meaning of Article 73 of that Regulation C/2018/8877. OJ L 323, 19.12.2018, pp. 10–15.

2. Data and methodologies

2.1. Data provided by the National Service of Agrifood Health and Safety (SENASA) of Honduras

The Panel considered all the data and information (hereafter called 'the Dossier') provided by National Service of Agrifood Health and Safety (SENASA) of Honduras on 23 December 2019, including the additional information provided by the SENASA of Honduras on 17 July 2020 after EFSA's request. The Dossier is managed by EFSA.

The structure and overview of the Dossier is shown in Table 1. The number of the relevant section is indicated in the opinion when referring to a specific part of the Dossier.

Table 1: Structure and overview of the Dossier

Dossier section	Overview of contents	Filename
1	Main document-dossier	Document Translation Bitter Melon Dossier SENASA
2	Additional information of efficiency of application of pesticides on *Thrips* control	Application effectiveness.xlsx
3	Methodologies for sampling consignments ISPM31	DP_01_2010_En_2015-12-22_PostCPM10_InkAmReformatted.pdf
4	Integrated measures for plants for planting ISPM36	ISPM_32_2009_En_2015-12-22_PostCPM10_InkAmReformatted.pdf
5	Categorisation of commodities according to their pest risk ISPM32	ISPM_36_2012_En_PlantsForPlanting_2019-04-30_PostCPM14_InkAm.pdf
6	Point by point reply to requested additional information by EFSA	*Momordica charantia* Final Document 07142020.docx
7	Example of application of pesticides and other chemicals in the production of *Momordica charantia*	PHYTOSANITARY PROGRAM.xlsx
8	Thrips population dynamics in a production cycle of momordica	Thrips behavior.xlsx

2.2. Literature searches performed by EFSA

A literature search was undertaken by EFSA to assess the state of the art regarding 1) the pest pressure in the applicant country; 2) efficacy of pre- and post-harvest measures applied to control *T. palmi*; 3) efficacy of insecticides to control *T. palmi*. The searches were run on 29/6/2020 (Appendix B). No language, date or document type restrictions were applied in the search strategy. Additional searches, limited to retrieve documents, were run when developing the opinion. The available scientific information, including previous EFSA opinions on the relevant pest (see pest data sheets in Appendix A) and the relevant literature and legislation (e.g. Regulation (EU) 2016/2031; Commission Implementing Regulations (EU) 2018/2019; (EU) 2018/2018 and (EU) 2019/2072) were taken into account.

2.3. Methodology

When developing the opinion, the Panel followed the EFSA Guidance on commodity risk assessment for the evaluation of high-risk plant dossiers (EFSA PLH Panel, 2019). Therefore, the proposed risk mitigation measures for *T. palmi* were evaluated in terms of efficacy or compliance with EU requirements as explained in Section 1.2. A conclusion on the likelihood of the commodity being free from *T. palmi* was determined and uncertainties identified using expert judgements. Pest freedom was assessed by estimating the number of infested fruits out of 10,000 exported fruits.

2.3.1. Listing and evaluation of risk mitigation measures

All currently used risk mitigation measures in the country of export were listed and evaluated.

The risk mitigation measures adopted in the production places and packinghouses as communicated by SENASA were evaluated with Expert Knowledge Elicitation (EKE) according to the Guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessment (EFSA Scientific Committee, 2018).

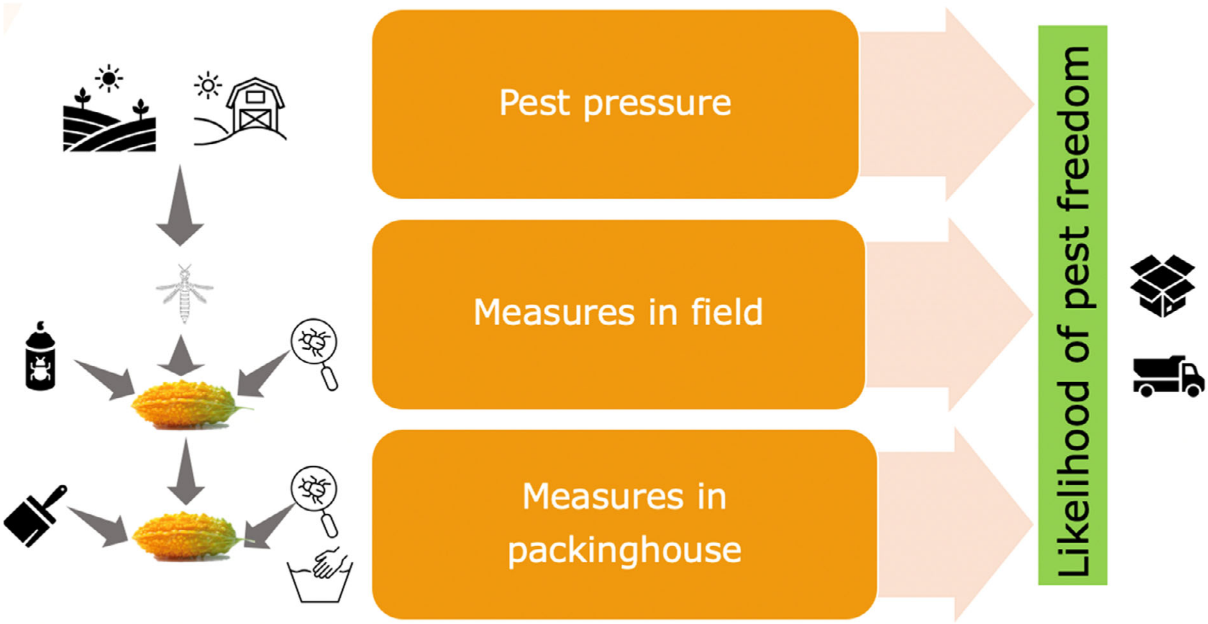

Figure 1: Conceptual framework to assess the likelihood of pest freedom for *Thrips palmi* on *Momordica charantia* fruits

Estimates of pest pressure of *T. palmi* in the production places and the effect of the mitigation measures taken in the field during production and the post-harvest mitigation measures taken in the packinghouse were summarised in a pest data sheet (see Appendix A).

To estimate the pest freedom of the commodity, a three-step approach was adopted following EFSA guidance (Annex B.8 of EFSA Scientific Committee, 2018). Therefore, three independent elicitations were conducted i.e. one to estimate pest pressure in the field; one to estimate the efficacy of mitigation measures applied in the field; and a final one to estimate the efficacy of post-harvest mitigation measures applied in the packinghouse. Combining these three estimations, the level of pest-freedom for *T. palmi* on *M. charantia* fruits from Honduras was determined (see Section 2.3.2). The final result indicates how many fruits out of 10,000 will be infested with *T. palmi* when arriving in the EU.

The uncertainties associated with the EKE were taken into account and quantified in the probability distribution applying the semi-formal method described in Section 3.5.2 of the EFSA-PLH Guidance on quantitative pest risk assessment (EFSA PLH Panel, 2018). Finally, the results were reported in terms of the likelihood of pest freedom. The lower 5% percentile of the uncertainty distribution reflects the opinion that pest freedom is with 95% certainty above this limit.

2.3.2. Conceptual model for risk of entry

The risk of entry of *Thrips palmi* via import of *M. charantia* fruits from Honduras was estimated in three steps using a formal conceptual model. In this model, the estimated pest pressure is used as starting point and corrected by the independent effects of measures in the field and in the packing house. The result of this model is the level of infestation at import calculated as follows:

$$\text{Import risk: } r_{import} = p_{pressure} \times p_{field}/10{,}000 \times p_{packing}/10{,}000$$

$$\text{Pest freedom: } PF_{import} = 10{,}000 - r_{import}$$

All values are expressed in numbers of fruits out of 10,000 (Table 2).

Table 2: Parameters for three-step conceptual model to estimate the likelihood of pest-freedom from *Thrips palmi* in *Momordica charantia* fruits

Parameter	Unit	Description
r_{import}	[No out of 10,000 fruits]	The number (out of 10,000) *M. charantia* fruits imported to the European Union (EU) from Honduras, which will be infested with *Thrips palmi* when arriving the EU
$p_{pressure}$	[No out of 10,000 fruits]	The number (out of 10,000) *M. charantia* fruits harvested on production sites in Honduras, which will be infested with *Thrips palmi* without application of specific measures against the pest (pest pressure under general agricultural practise)
p_{field}	[No out of 10,000 fruits]	The number of *M. charantia* fruits (out of 10,000 infested fruits) that remain infested after applying measures on production sites
$p_{packing}$	[No out of 10,000 fruits]	The number of *M. charantia* fruits (out of 10,000 infested fruits) that remain infested after applying measures at the packing house
PF_{import}	[No out of 10,000 fruits]	The number (out of 10,000) *M. charantia* fruits imported to the EU from Honduras, which will be pest free of *Thrips palmi* when arriving the EU

The input parameters $p_{pressure}$, p_{field} and $p_{packing}$ are determined by separate Expert Knowledge Elicitations (EKE). The uncertainties associated with the EKE were taken into account and quantified in the probability distribution applying the semi-formal method described in Section 3.5.2 of the EFSA-PLH Guidance on quantitative pest risk assessment (EFSA PLH Panel, 2018).

The model results r_{import} and PF_{import} were calculated using Monte Carlo simulation. A final distribution is fitted to the simulation results.

Finally, the results were reported in terms of the likelihood of pest freedom. The lower 5% percentile of the uncertainty distribution reflects the opinion that pest freedom is with 95% certainty above this limit.

3. Thrips palmi

3.1. Biology of the pest

Thrips palmi Karny (Thysanoptera: Thripidae), commonly known as melon thrips, oriental thrips and southern yellow thrips, was first described in 1925 from Sumatra and Java (Indonesia) (Karny, 1925). The species previously had the common name 'palm thrips'; however, no palm species are known to host this pest and the origin of this name is in honour of Dr B.T. Palm, a well-known specialist of this group.

At 25°C, the life cycle from egg to egg lasts 17.5 days (OEPP/EPPO, 1989). The life cycle differs little from that of most phytophagous Thripidae (Figure 1). The adults emerge from the pupa in the soil and consequently, move to the leaves, flowers and fruits of the plant, where they lay their eggs in an incision made with the ovipositor. They preferably lay their eggs in young growing tissue of leaves, and also the flowers and fruit of a wide range of host plants, especially Cucurbitaceae, Solanaceae and Leguminosae. The two larval stages (LI and LII) and male and female adults feed on the maturing leaves, stems, flowers and flower petals and surfaces of fruits. They suck the contents of tissue cells with their specialised mouthparts, leaving them empty, causing silvery scars or leaf bronzing. The second-stage larva drops from the plant to the soil (or packing cases or growing medium) and completes its cycle by pupating (pupa I and pupa II) in the substrate (EPPO, 2018a,b).

The life cycle and population dynamics of *T. palmi* in Japan have been reviewed by Kawai (1990).

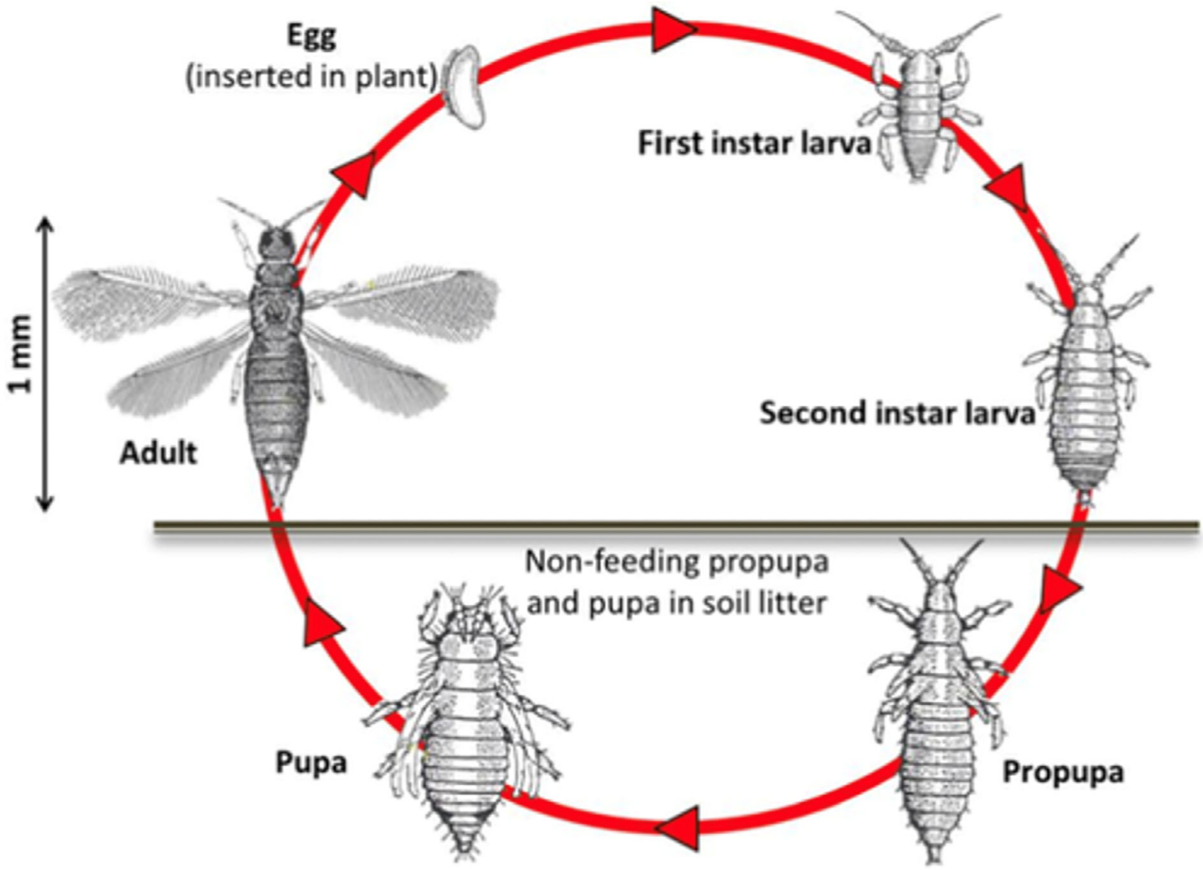

Figure 2: Life cycle of Thripidae (e.g., *Thrips palmi*)

Thrips palmi is primarily a subtropical and tropical species. Tsumuki et al. (1987) analysed the cold hardiness of *T. palmi* in Japan and concluded that it could not survive outdoor winter conditions in southern Honshu island.

Sakimura et al. (1986) set the outdoor northern limit to 34°N, which corresponds to the very south of Honshu. However, Nagai and Tsumuki (1990) reported no reduction of adult populations at temperatures as low as from −3 to −7°C on weeds in an unheated glasshouse between mid-January and mid-February in Japan. Developmental time decreased with increasing temperature up to 32.5°C in all stages. The total developmental time was longest at 12.5°C (64.2 days) and shortest at 32.5°C (9.2 days), 12.7 days at 25°C (Park et al., 2010). The mean developmental time for the egg stage varied between 24 days at 12.5°C, 6–7 days at 25°C, 4–5 days at 30°C and 3.3 days at 32.5°C (Park et al., 2010). Developmental times varied, however, between different lab assays, host plants, photoperiod etc. by a few days between different experiments in particular larval development at lower temperatures. The lower developmental threshold was 10.6, 10.6, 9.1, and 10.7°C for egg, larva, prepupa and pupa, respectively. The thermal constant required to complete the respective stage was 71.7, 59.2, 18.1 and 36.8 degree-days (DD). The lower threshold temperature and thermal requirements varied a bit between different studies ranging from 10.1°C and 194 DD (McDonald et al., 1999) and 10.6°C and 183.3 DD for egg to adult development (Park et al., 2010) to 11.3°C and 196 DD (Yadav and Chang, 2014) and 11.6°C and 189.1 DD (Kawai, 1985).

Parthenogenesis (arrhenotoky) in *T. palmi* has been reported by Yoshihara and Kawai (1982). The oviposition behaviour of the species was observed in Taiwan (Wang et al., 1989); a preoviposition period of 1–3 days for virgin females and 1–5 days for mated ones was recorded. Virgin females laid 3–164 eggs (1.0–7.9 eggs per day) during their lifespan, while mated females laid 3–204 eggs (0.8–7.3 eggs per day). At 25°C, the net reproductive rate (28.0), female fecundity (59.6 eggs/female) and daily oviposition rate (3.8 eggs/day) reached the maximum level (Kawai, 1985). At the optimum temperature for population growth (25–30°C), the number of generations was estimated in 25–26/year (Huang and Chen, 2004). Significant differences in population growth among crops were highlighted (Kawai, 1986). The survival rates of the larval and pupal stages fed on cucumber, kidney bean, eggplant and balsam pear were high, whereas the survival rates of those fed on okra and chrysanthemum were low. The larvae fed on tomato and strawberry were unable to pupate. Duration of the larval and pupal stages fed on chrysanthemum and okra was longer than the duration of those fed on other crops. The longevity of the adults fed on cucumber, pumpkin, eggplant and kidney bean was increased, whereas the longevity of those fed on chrysanthemum, tomato and strawberry was decreased. The fecundity of adult females (n. eggs/female) fed on cucumber was maximum (60), while the fecundity of those fed on melon, eggplant and pumpkin amounted to 20. The differences in the generation time were not significant among crops, unlike the differences in the net reproductive rate. The intrinsic rate of natural increase of *T. palmi* fed on cucumber was maximum and the value was 0.134, while that of *T. palmi* fed on melon, eggplant and pumpkin ranged from 0.08 to 0.11 (Kawai, 1986).

3.2. Symptoms

3.2.1. General symptoms

On plant material, at inspection, silvery feeding scars on the leaf surface, especially alongside the midrib and veins, can be seen (Cannon et al., 2007). Heavily infested plants are characterised by a silvered or bronzed appearance of the leaves, stunted leaves and terminal shoots. At high densities, feeding by *T. palmi* may cause damage to fruits (Kawai, 1986) as well, such as scarring, discoloration and deformation in developed fruits or fruit abortion in an early stage. Cucumber, eggplant and pepper fruit are damaged when thrips feed in the blossoms. Symptoms may be found on all parts of a wide range of plant species (Sakimura et al., 1986). Although *T. palmi* feeds on *Momordica sp.,* no specific information of symptoms and damage caused to fruits of *M. charantia* is available.

3.2.2. Pest density of *Thrips palmi* in fruits

Despite its wide host range, including fruits and vegetables, the information about the actual pest density levels of *T. palmi* itself in various crops is limited. Most relevant papers measure the economic injury level (EIL) and the economic threshold (ET), which are calculated by the damage caused by the pest correlated with pest density. Yet, no information has been found of EILs and ETs calculated for *T. palmi* infestations in *M. charantia* under greenhouse or semi-field conditions in particular.

Rosenheim et al. (1990) recorded that in cucumber, densities of *T. palmi* (number per unit area of plant substrate) were greatest on foliage, and lowest on fruits, with an average ratio of 0.55 per female flower and 0.19 per fruit compared to foliage. During the early stage of development, fruits physically support the female flowers, but as the densities of *T. palmi* in flowers is low, the opportunities for them to incidentally feed upon and scar young fruit are low as well, this in contrast to *Frankliniella occidentalis*.

At high densities, *T. palmi* feeding may cause damage to fruits (Kawai, 1986; Welter et al., 1990). No records, however, are available specifically for *M. charantia*, and data available in literature for cucumber likely better reflect the incidence on *M. charantia* than those on Solanaceous crops like eggplant or sweet pepper. Kawai (1985) estimated EILs for cucumber the tolerable density of adults – at a constant high density – at 4.4 per leaf for uninjured fruit yield and at 5.3 adults per leaf for the total fruit yield (at a level of yield loss of 5%) and 8.8 adults per leaf (at a level of yield loss of 10%). In addition, Kawai (1990) reported EILs of 0.08 adults per leaf for eggplant and 0.11 adults per flower for sweet pepper. In other studies, in Japan, EILs were estimated at densities of 1–10 adults per cucumber leaf or 2–3 adults or larvae per pepper flower in south Florida, USA (Capinera, 2000). In case of high infestations in eggplant, less fruits are produced and of smaller size (Yadav and Chang, 2014). They recommended as an action threshold 1.05–1.50 thrips per flower or 4.91–10.17 adults per sticky trap over a 4-day period. Welter et al. (1990) calculated an action threshold of 94 thrips/cucumber leaf early in the growing season, showing that an EIL for fruits is relatively high for *T. palmi*. EILs are quite variable and differ per crop, per country, and timing in the season and ETs depend on variable and dynamic economic factors such as costs for control, labour, yield, market price etc. (Pedigo et al., 1986). Yadav and Chang (2014) indicated that the percentage of fruit damage correlates with the population dynamics of the thrips. Besides, thrips-related fruit damage in eggplants can best be evaluated in terms of the damaged fruit percentage, not in terms of yield loss.

3.3. Confusion with other pests

Thrips palmi identification is hampered by its small size and great similarity with other yellow species of thrips. Indeed, *T. palmi* can be mistaken for common thrips species with similar characteristics, e.g. *T. flavus* Schrank and *T. tabaci* Lindeman distributed worldwide, *T. alatus* Bhatti and *T. pallidulus* Bagnall in the Oriental region, *T. nigropilosus* Uzel and *T. alni* Uzel in the Palaearctic region and *T. urticae* Fabricius in Europe. For the distinction between look-alike species, microscopic examination by a seasoned expert of the morphological characteristics is required, or by molecular analysis (EPPO, 2018a,b).

3.4. Effectiveness of control options worldwide

A variety of chemical, cultural, biological and physical measures is used by growers across the world to manage *T. palmi* (Morse and Hoddle, 2006; Cannon et al., 2007), to prevent or maintain populations at a very low-density level. Management measures include the use of systemic and contact insecticides, insecticidal soaps, essential oils/plants extracts, soil treatments, the use of resident or introduced natural enemies, exclusion of the crops by physical barriers such as windbreaks, screenhouses, row covers, bagging of fruits, covering the soil with organic or plastic mulch or film, the removal of alternative weed hosts, trap crops (Salas, 2004), alternation of susceptible crops (Young and Zhang, 1998; Maltby and Walsh, 2005) and the use of less susceptible cultivars. Each of them separately has an effect, to restrict the entry and colonisation of the crop, to limit or suppress population growth (Kawai, 1990; Matsui et al., 1995).

Other techniques are used to monitor the number of thrips in order to establish the level and distribution of thrips infestation in a crop, such as the use of sticky traps, alone or with lures or pheromones, water pan traps, sampling of leaves and leaf beating. Monitoring results can be used to establish the distribution in a crop, to establish economic threshold levels and to facilitate the decision-making for which and when measures need to be taken to manage *T. palmi* infestations (Dong and Hsiu, 2019; Nakamura et al., 2014; Sánchez et al., 2011; Shibao and Tanaka, 2014; Thongjua et al., 2015).

3.5. Detection and monitoring

3.5.1. Sampling

Thrips palmi adults and larvae generally are found on the foliage: adults aggregate on the young vegetative parts, sometimes in the flowers, larvae on the underside of maturing leaves, concentrated in the upper third part of the crop (Kawai, 1990; Zhang et al., 2014). Which parts of the plant best reflect the relationship between the density of thrips and the resulting damage depends on the crop type: flowers in orchids (Maketon et al., 2014) and eggplant (Yadav and Chang, 2013), leaves in cucumber (Bacci et al., 2008) and bean (Osorio and Cardona, 2003). The number of leaves or flowers sampled depends on the crop, stage of infestation, the experimental set-up etc. For cucumber, reflecting best a bitter gourd crop, the best sampling size consisted of 35 leaflets per field or 40 leaflets per ha (Osorio and Cardona, 2003), taken at random from the uppermost part of plants to establish the action threshold.

3.5.2. Monitoring with traps

Adults can be sampled with water pan traps, sticky traps and LED light traps. The use of sticky traps is common practice around the world for monitoring thrips, whereas water pan traps are uncommon and LED light traps not yet implemented at a commercial level. Blue and white have shown to be attractive colours for monitoring *T. palmi* in cucumber, eggplant and sweet pepper (Kawai, 1983; Kawai and Kitamura, 1987, 1990; Kawai, 1990; Yadav and Chang, 2013; Zhang et al., 2014) or wax gourd, respectively (Huang, 1989); for some crops, e.g. in orchids, yellow is more attractive (Culliney, 1990; Thongjua et al., 2015; Maketon et al., 2014). Besides trap colour and relation to the background colour of the crop and the environment, its efficacy in a crop also depends on placement height in the crop (upper third). In recent years, a combination of LED lights covered by transparent plates show that *T. palmi* is attracted to light at wavelengths from 500 to 525 nm (Hajime et al., 2014; Shibao and Tanaka, 2014).

3.6. Management options

3.6.1. Chemical control

Contact and systemic insecticides combined with insecticidal soaps, essential oils/plant extracts, are frequently applied for suppression of *T. palmi*, in particular during the first years after invading a new area or when the pest needs to be eradicated (MacLeod et al., 2004; Cannon et al., 2007). Then, efficacy of control can be very high (90–95%) when timely and regularly applied. However, application of insecticides alone is not an adequate tool to control *T. palmi* because the eggs (in the foliar tissue) and the pupae (in the soil) are relatively insensitive to insecticide application. Given the polyphagous nature of *T. palmi* and the short life cycle, the population density in the surrounding environment of a crop may be very high and this may require repeated insecticide applications.

In addition, *T. palmi* is able to develop insecticide resistance already after a few years requiring alternation of different active ingredients which most often do not match with integration of biological or integrated control methods. Insecticide resistance in *T. palmi* was recorded as early as 1994 (Nozawa et al., 1994). In recent years, resistance has been recorded in Asia for insecticides such as cypermetrhin (Kim et al., 2019; Ghosh et al., 2020), imidacloprid (Bao et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Ghosh et al., 2020), and in particular spinosad (Kim et al., 2019) and spinetoram (Gao et al., 2019; Shi et al., 2020). Field populations in Korea also showed reduced mortality to emamectin benzoate, chlorfenapyr, cyantraniliprole and dinotefuran (Kim et al., 2019). Resistance varies geographically and locally (Kim et al., 2019). To slow down insecticide resistance, it is important to apply insecticides that are effective in a rotation programme.

3.6.2. Mass trapping

Mass trapping with sticky traps/ribbons can reduce the numbers of *T. palmi* in some crops, such as sweet pepper and eggplant (Kawai, 1990, 2001; Murai, 2002). When these ribbons were set every 2–3 m^2 in a greenhouse, the density of *T. palmi* was reduced 10–20% compared to that in greenhouses without ribbons (Nonaka and Nagai,1984). In strawberry, it could reduce adult thrips (*F. occidentalis*) numbers per flower by 61% and fruit bronzing by 55% (Sampson and Kirk, 2013). However, in these and other studies on thrips (see Sampson and Kirk, 2013), either no assessment of crop damage was made, or it failed to prevent damage (Trdan et al., 2005 for *T. tabaci* in onion crops), and therefore, no evidence is available of its economic viability. Nevertheless, mass trapping could be cost-effective at an early stage of invasion (Kawai and Kitamura, 1987, 1990), in high-value crops (Sampson and Kirk, 2013) and when part of an overall IPM programme. As a part of a combination of measures, it could maintain thrips numbers below the damage threshold during specific periods of preharvest, when pesticides cannot be used because of residue levels.

3.6.3. Cultural control

Several cultural practices can effectively reduce the level of infestation by *T. palmi*. Physical barriers hampering the access to the host plants can protect a crop from infestation, such as windbreaks, growing the crop in glasshouses or fine-meshed screenhouses, crop covers and or row covers, bagging of fruits, covering the soil with organic or plastic mulch or silver plastic or spraying kaolin. Additionally, intercropping, the use of trap plants and the removal of alternative weed hosts (Salas, 2004; Cannon et al., 2007) (Ingrid et al., 2012; Kawai, 2001; Razzak and Seal, 2017; Razzak et al., 2018; Salas, 2004; Shirotsuka et al., 2016) also contributes to a better crop hygiene and thus a lower infestation level. Population build-up is often hampered by periods of heavy rains in the open field (Huang, 1989; Etienne et al., 1990), but overhead irrigation of the crop does not.

Cultural control measures can be part of a systems approach for the control of *T. palmi*.

3.6.3.1. Fruit bagging

Preharvest fruit bagging is an extensively used practice in many countries around the world (Faci et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2014; Shen et al., 2014). The use is twofold, it ensures homogeneity, aesthetics and quality of the product and it protects against diseases and pests, such as fruit flies (Tephritidae) and fruit borers (Lepidoptera). In the literature, there is not so much information for the effect on the prevention of damage by thrips, indicating it is primarily for other insect pests.

Few studies have been performed on the use of fruit bagging in reducing the incidence of thrips pests: Affandi et al. (2008) found a reduction in scarring of mango fruits (caused by an unspecified species of thrips) of 32–42% in Indonesia using double-layered bags of plastic and paper. Karar et al. (2019) found that harvested fruits of mango in closed paper bags (brown paper inner black and butter – wet resistant/greaseproof – paper) were 100% free of (unspecified) thrips in Pakistan. Martins (2018) noticed a 30–50% reduction in lesions caused by *F. brevicaulis* in Brazil, and according to de López et al. (2020) bagging alone of bananas reduced losses by 90–100% by the red rust thrips (*Chaetanaphothrips signipennis*) compared to bunches with no bags. In banana plantings, covering bunches with polyethylene bags during fruit development provides a physical barrier to insect infestations, but bags cannot fully protect the fruit when a thrips infestation is heavy (Hara et al., 2002). No records have been found in literature on the effect of preharvest fruit bagging of *M. charantia* fruits.

3.6.4. Biological control

Macro-organisms

Augmentative biological control by seasonal or inundative releases of natural enemies such as predatory mites (e.g. *Neoseoiulus* spp. or *Amblyseius* spp.) or predatory bugs (e.g. *Orius* spp.) can be very effective in greenhouses or in an outdoor Mediterranean climate when other crop pests are carefully managed and applications are timely made. Other generalist predators such as lacewings (*Chrysoperla* spp.), mirid bugs (*Macrolophus* spp.) or lady bugs (Coccinellidae) can prey on *T. palmi*, but will predominantly target preys which are prevalent, and thus only partly contribute to thrips control (Van Lenteren and Loomans, 1999). Conservation biological control, relying on the natural colonisation of a crop by natural enemies already present in the environment, is often too late and too less, and therefore, much less effective in an early and timely control of *T. palmi*. Control of thrips pests heavily relies on chemical applications; however, the use of insecticides may have detrimental effects on biological control agents (Cuthbertson, 2014).

Microorganisms

Application of entomopathogens, such as the fungi *Akanthomyces lecanii* (previously named as *Lecanicillium lecanii* and *Verticillium lecani*), *Metarhizium anisopliae*, *M. rileyi* (synonym *Nomuraea rileyi*), *Beauveria bassiana* and *Paecilomyces fumosoroseus* can have a certain control effect on thrips whereas others like *Bacillus thuringiensis* have a limited effect (Vestergaard et al., 1995; Ekesi et al., 2000; Ekesi and Maniania, 2002; Hadiya et al., 2016; Castineiras et al., 1996; Silva et al., 2011; Saito, 1991; Shao et al., 2015; Cuthbertson et al., 2005; North et al., 2006; Saito, 1992; Trujillo et al., 2003; Visalakshy et al., 2004). Others such as *Purpureocillium lilacinum* (Hotaka et al., 2015) and *Isaria javanica* (Park et al., 2018) are still in a developmental phase.

Biotechnical control and semiochemicals

The effect of semiochemicals (Kirk, 2017; Qing et al., 2004) – either as a repellent or attractant – on the behaviour and trapping efficiency is still in an experimental phase. An aggregation pheromone for *T. palmi* has been identified (Akella et al., 2014), it can be used for monitoring, but implementation is still in an experimental phase (Kirk, 2017). In experimental set-ups, methyl salicylate (MeSA) has shown to attract natural enemies and to reduce populations in cucumber plants (Dong and Hsiu, 2019), but has not been developed to a commercial scale.

3.6.5. Host plant resistance

A few research reports mention differences in susceptibility to foliar injury among cultivars of pepper (Nuessly and Nagata, 1995), sweet pepper (Matsui et al., 1995; Yasuda and Momonoki, 1988; Visschers et al., 2019) and bean (Cardona et al., 2002; Frei et al., 2004), but host plant resistance has shown a low or no effectiveness in the management of *T. palmi*. No records have been found which specifically refer to breeding resistance genes into *M. charantia* or other *Momordica* species.

3.6.6. Post-harvest treatments

Potassium salts of fatty acids also known as insecticidal soaps are used as insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and algaecides. Mixtures of potassium salts of fatty acids and essential oils may be used as selective acaricides (Tsolakis and Ragusa, 2008), and insecticides (Wafula et al., 2017) as an alternative to synthetic chemical pesticides enabling farmers to produce with acceptable residue levels that meet market requirements. In snap bean in Kenya (Wafula et al., 2017) potassium salts of fatty acids reduced thrips (*Frankliniella* spp. and *Megalurothrips sjostedti*) populations up to 54%, comparable with synthetic pesticides.

Washing produce – fruits and vegetables – with chlorinated or ozonated water is used to sanitise water systems and to disinfect the surface of produce to prevent decay caused by microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi and yeasts and other pathogens at concentrations between 100 and 200 ppm active ingredient, at pH around 7 (Bornhorst et al., 2018; Ilic et al., 2018). It is not designed to kill insects, and little or no scientific evidence is available that it works as such.

4. Commodity data

4.1. Description of the commodity

The commodity to be imported are fruits of *Momordica charantia* also known as bitter gourd or Chinese bitter melons. *M charantia* fruits from Honduras, intended for human consumption, are targeting two markets i.e. the United States of America with approximately a volume of 78.89% (111,005 boxes per year), and the European Union 21% (29,702 boxes) of the total volume exported 140,707 boxes). Each box contains 4 kg. The expected trade volume for 2020 is ca. of 118,000 kg of fruits (Table 3).

Table 3: Overview of estimated export volumes for *Momordica charantia* fruits designated for export to the EU from Honduras (volumes as provided by Honduras in dossier)

Momordica variety	2019		2020							
	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June – October	November	December
Chinese (Kg)	22,000	23,300	23,200	21,600	22,900	21,000	19,800	No export	21,500	19,900
Hindu (Kg)	22,000	23,300	23,200	21,600	22,900	21,000	19,800	No export	21,500	19,900

4.2. Description of the production areas

Momordica charantia production is concentrated in one area in Honduras, the Department of Comayagua (Figure 3). All production areas of *M. charantia* in Honduras are destined for exportation. Currently all the production of *M. charantia* is carried out in open fields. As a protection measure for *M. charantia* plants, crop areas and other adjacent crops include living barriers or fences placed in rows around the contours of *M. charantia*. There is a spacing of 50 m distance between crops.

Figure 3: Location of Honduras in Central America and the department of Comayagua within Honduras where *Momordica charantia* production is concentrated (maps taken from Wikipedia CC-BY-SA-3.0)

4.2.1. Source of planting material

According to the information provided in the dossier seeds are used as propagating material.

4.2.2. Production cycle

The growing cycle of *M. charantia* as described in the dossier starts with an initial period of up to 13 days; seeds are sown, germinated and young plants prepared to be transplanted to the field. Fourteen days after germination (and up to 63 days after transplant), plants are brought to a fruiting stage, which usually starts between 56 and 63 days after transplanting, depending on environmental conditions (temperature and precipitation). The harvest period lasts 12 weeks (ca. 84 days). Taking into account the different phases in plant development, a complete growing cycle takes approximately 22 weeks or 154 days, and according to this scheme, the optimal conditions of fruit quality are achieved for export to the EU. Annual production of *M. charantia* fruits for export to the EU usually comprises two growing cycles, starting with plantings in August to start harvesting in mid-October and the second cycle starts in December with a harvesting period in February. There is a 3-month gap (between June and October) without *M. charantia Momordica* export.

5. Overview of interceptions

According to Europhyt/TRACES-NT accessed on 14 July 2020 and covering all interceptions since 1995 there was one interception of *T. palmi* in 2019 on *M. charantia* fruits from Honduras destinated to the EU.

6. Pest pressure and risk mitigation measures

The evaluation of the efficacy of the risk mitigation measures against *T. palmi* was done in a three-step approach. First, an estimate was made for the pest pressure of *T. palmi* in the production environment. Secondly, the control effect of the pest management measures in the field was estimated. Thirdly, the control effect of the post-harvest measures (packing house) was estimated.

The information used in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the risk mitigation measures is summarised in a pest data sheet (see Appendix A).

6.1. Pest pressure in production places

Based on monitoring data in production fields available in the dossier (see Sections 1, 7 and 8), the Panel estimated pest pressure in the production places under a no-intervention scenario (i.e. no mitigation measures). Moreover, the climatic conditions in Honduras (based on monthly average temperatures) are very favourable for the development of this pest.

6.2. Risk mitigation measures applied in production fields

With the information provided by SENASA (Dossier sections 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8), the Panel summarised the risk mitigation measures that are currently applied in the production places (Table 4).

Table 4: Overview of currently applied risk mitigation measures for *Momordica charantia* fruits designated for export to the EU from Honduras

Risk mitigation measures	Description of applied measures
Export to EU during specific period of the year	There is an intentional 3- to 5-month gap (between June and October) in which *M. charantia* fruits are not produced and exported to the EU.
Pest-specific monitoring	There is a specific monitoring programme of the fields for thrips that is supervised by SENASA Technical staff. Monitoring occurs weekly throughout the production cycle of the crop and samples are taken for laboratory examination.
Chemical control	Various insecticides are frequently applied (see details in Appendix A).
Biological control	Biological control agents are not applied (dossier section 6). Nonetheless, there are naturally occurring control agents in the area of *M. charantia* production.
Protected cultivation	Production in greenhouse is in an experimental phase (dossier section 6), however currently there are no *M. charantia* fruits exported from protected cultivation in Honduras.

6.3. Risk mitigation measures applied in the packinghouse

With the information provided by the SENASA (Dossier sections 1, 2, 6, 7, 8), the Panel summarised the risk mitigation measures that are currently applied in the packinghouse (Table 5).

Table 5: Overview of currently applied risk mitigation measures applied in the packinghouse on *Momordica charantia* fruits designated for export to the EU from Honduras

	Description of applied measures
Inspection	Fruits are visually inspected in the field before transport.
Transport	The collected fruits are transported in vehicles with airtight cargo compartment.
Inspection upon arrival to the packing house	Reception at the packing plant: Upon arrival at the packing facility, the transport conditions are reviewed, pest monitoring is done and the entry or rejection of the fruit is decided.
Sorting/Classification	Once the fruit enters the packinghouse, they proceed to the selection and cleaning process. At this stage, possible physical damages are detected. The selection parameters consist of separating all those fruits that present deformations, inappropriate colour or any type of damage that detracts value and quality.
Brushing	Fruit is brushed.
Washing with pressurised water	The whole fruit is washed with pressurised water in order to eliminate any live insects that may appear, this is done manually to each individual fruit.
Submersion in water (1st)	The fruits are subjected to a post-harvest treatment which consists of submerging the fruit in a container containing a water solution with an undefined disinfectant
Submersion in water (2nd)	15 min post-harvest immersion treatment in cold water (approx. 4–8°C) with sodium hypochlorite.
Pest Inspection	A 15% sample of the fruits that is intended to be packaged is inspected for *T. palmi.*

6.4. Overview of the evaluation of *Thrips palmi*

Rating of the likelihood of pest freedom	**Very frequently pest free** (based on the Median)				
Percentile of the distribution	5%	25%	Median	75%	95%
Proportion of pest-free fruits*	9,406 out of 10,000 fruits	9,749 out of 10,000 fruits	**9,884** out of 10,000 fruits	9,957 out of 10,000 fruits	9,994 out of 10,000 fruits
Proportion of infested fruits*	6 out of 10,000 fruits	43 out of 10,000 fruits	**116** out of 10,000 fruits	251 out of 10,000 fruits	594 out of 10,000 fruits
Summary of the information used for the evaluation	**Possibility that the pest could become associate with the commodity** Environmental conditions in Honduras are optimal for *T. palmi* development. *T. palmi* is widespread in the area of production and is considered by farmers a phytosanitary problem. The frequency and the number of sprays is very high probably underlying high infestation in the field. Thrips are recorded on *M. charantia* plants throughout a growing cycle. **Measures taken against the pest and their efficacy** The main control measures applied in the field until harvest are official inspections, monitoring, application of insecticides and inspection during harvesting. Efficacy of the applied insecticides ranges from 35% to 84% during the production stage of the crop and from 33% to 100% during the development and flowering period of the crop (Dossier sections 7 and 8). Measures in the packing house include inspection before processing, brushing and air blowing, washing and pest inspections before packing. Measures in the packing house target mainly adults and larvae and have minimal effect on eggs. **Interception records** There is a single interception reported in Europhyt/Traces -NT (1995–2020) of *T. palmi* on *M. charantia* fruits originating from Honduras, in November 2019. **Shortcomings of current measures/procedures** Application of insecticides is mainly performed on a calendar-like basis. Continuous use of insecticides is likely to cause development of resistant populations of *T. palmi.* Most measures applied in the packing house are not likely to have an effect on eggs that may be present on fruits. **Main uncertainties** There are limited data on population dynamics of *T. palmi* on *M. charantia*. Since identification of thrips at species level is difficult in the field, it is possible that field observations of thrips refer to other species than *T. palmi* (e.g. mixtures of *F. occidentalis* and *T. palmi*). Specific efficacy data for field applied measures are either limited or not available. Data on efficacy of the methods applied in the packing house in removing *T. palmi* from fruits are not available. The level of insecticide resistance against the insecticides applied in Honduras is uncertain.				

*: Numbers rounded off to the nearest whole number.

6.5. Outcome of expert knowledge elicitation

Table 6 and Figure 4 show the outcome of the EKE regarding pest freedom after the evaluation of the currently proposed risk mitigation measures for *T. palmi*.

Figure 4 provides an explanation of the descending distribution function describing the likelihood of pest freedom after the evaluation of the currently proposed risk mitigation measures for *M. charantia* fruits designated for export to the EU for *T. palmi.*

Table 6: Assessment of the likelihood of pest freedom following evaluation of current risk mitigation measures against *Thrips palmi* on *Momordica charantia* fruits from Honduras designated for export to the EU. In panel A, the median value for the assessed level of pest freedom for each pest is indicated by 'M', the 5% percentile is indicated by L and the 95% percentile is indicated by U. The percentiles together span the 90% uncertainty range regarding pest freedom. The pest freedom categories are defined in panel B of the table

Pest species	Sometimes pest free	More often than not pest free	Frequently pest free	Very frequently pest free	Extremely frequently pest free	Pest free with some exceptional cases	Pest free with few exceptional cases	Almost always pest free
Thrips palmi			**L**	**M**			**U**	

PANEL A

	Pest freedom category	Pest-free fruits out of 10,000
(red)	Sometimes pest free	≤ 5,000
(orange)	More often than not pest free	5,000–≤ 9,000
(light orange)	Frequently pest free	9,000–≤ 9,500
(light yellow)	Very frequently pest free	9,500–≤ 9,900
(yellow)	Extremely frequently pest free	9,900–≤ 9,950
(light green)	Pest free with some exceptional cases	9,950–≤ 9,990
(green)	Pest free with few exceptional cases	9,990–≤ 9,995
(dark green)	Almost always pest free	9,995–≤ 10,000

Legend of pest freedom categories	
L	Pest freedom category includes the elicited lower bound of the 90% uncertainty range
M	Pest freedom category includes the elicited median
U	Pest freedom category includes the elicited upper bound of the 90% uncertainty range

PANEL B

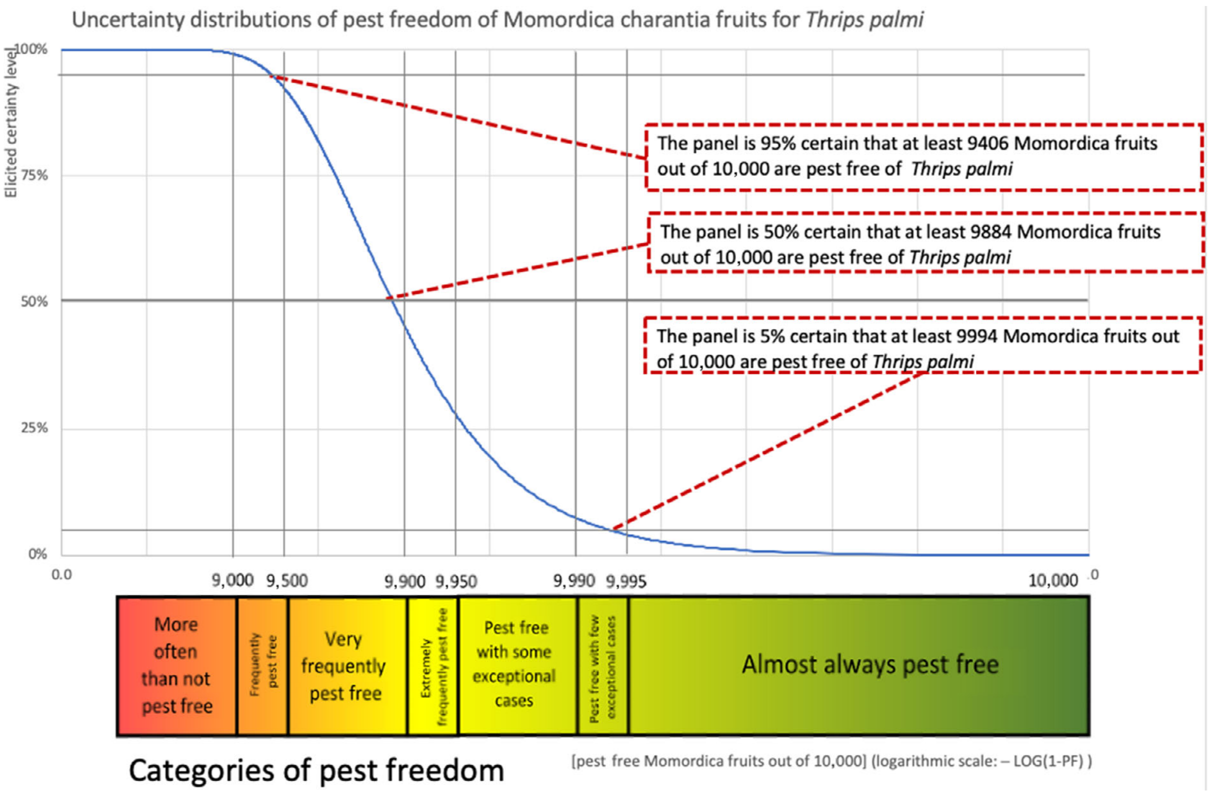

Figure 4: Explanation of the descending distribution function describing the likelihood of pest freedom from *Thrips palmi* after the evaluation of the currently proposed risk mitigation measures for fruits of *Momordica charantia* from Honduras designated for export to the EU

7. Conclusions

For *Thrips palmi* on *Momordica charantia* fruits from Honduras the likelihood of pest freedom following evaluation of current risk mitigation measures was estimated as '*very frequently pest free'* with the 90% uncertainty range reaching from '*frequently pest free*' to '*pest free with few exceptional cases'*. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,406 and 10,000 fruits per 10,000 will be free from *T. palmi*.

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Glossary

Control (of a pest)	Suppression, containment or eradication of a pest population (FAO, 1995, 2017)
Entry (of a pest)	Movement of a pest into an area where it is not yet present, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled (FAO, 2017)
Establishment (of a pest)	Perpetuation, for the foreseeable future, of a pest within an area after entry (FAO, 2017)
Impact (of a pest)	The impact of the pest on the crop output and quality and on the environment in the occupied spatial units
Introduction (of a pest)	The entry of a pest resulting in its establishment (FAO, 2017)
Measures	Control (of a pest) is defined in ISPM 5 (FAO 2017) as 'Suppression, containment or eradication of a pest population' (FAO, 1995). Control measures are measures that have a direct effect on pest abundance. Supporting measures are organisational measures or procedures supporting the choice of appropriate risk mitigation measures that do not directly affect pest abundance.
Pathway	Any means that allows the entry or spread of a pest (FAO, 2017)
Pest pressure	Local population density of a pest (often used in economic threshold levels in IPM)
Phytosanitary measures	Any legislation, regulation or official procedure having the purpose to prevent the introduction or spread of quarantine pests, or to limit the economic impact of regulated non-quarantine pests (FAO, 2017)
Protected zone	A Protected zone is an area recognised at EU level to be free from a harmful organism, which is established in one or more other parts of the Union.
Quarantine pest	A pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being officially controlled (FAO, 2017)

Regulated non-quarantine pest	A non-quarantine pest whose presence in plants for planting affects the intended use of those plants with an economically unacceptable impact and which is therefore regulated within the territory of the importing contracting party (FAO, 2017)
Risk mitigation measure	A measure acting on pest introduction and/or pest spread and/or the magnitude of the biological impact of the pest should the pest be present. A risk mitigation measure may become a phytosanitary measure, action or procedure according to the decision of the risk manager
Spread (of a pest)	Expansion of the geographical distribution of a pest within an area (FAO, 2017)

Abbreviations

CABI	Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International
EKE	Expert Knowledge Elicitation
EPPO	European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
INS	Insect
ISPM	International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures
PLH	Plant Health
PRA	Pest Risk Assessment
RNQPs	Regulated Non-Quarantine Pests

Appendix A – Data sheets of pests selected for further evaluation via Expert Knowledge Elicitation

A.1. Thrips palmi

A.1.1. Organism information

Taxonomic information	Current valid scientific name: *Thrips palmi* Karny * Synonyms: *Thrips clarus* Moulton, 1928; *Thrips leucadophilus* Priesner, 1936; *Thrips gossypicola* Ramakrishna & Margabandhu, 1939; *Chloethrips aureus* Ananthakrishnan & Jagadish, 1967 *Thrips gracilis* Ananthakrishnan & Jagadish, 1968. Name used in the EU legislation: *Thrips palmi* Karny [THRIPL] Order: Thysanoptera Family: Thripidae Common name: oriental thrips, palm thrips, southern yellow thrips Name used in the Dossier: *Thrips palmi* * see Symptoms: confusion with other pests
Group	Insects
EPPO code	THRIPL
Regulated status	*Thrips palmi* is regulated in the European Union, and it is listed in the Union Quarantine pests: Annex II Part A - Pests not known to occur in the European Union. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072. A1 list: East Africa (2001), Egypt (2018), Southern Africa (2001), Argentina (2019), Chile (2019), Paraguay (1993), Uruguay (1993), Bahrain (2003), Jordan (2013), Kazakhstan (2017), Azerbaijan (2007), Georgia (2018), Moldova (2006), Russia (2014), Turkey (2016), Ukraine (2019), EAEU (2016), EPPO (1988) A2 list: CAHFSA (1990), COSAVE (2018) Quarantine: Morocco (2018), Tunisia (2012), Mexico (2018), Israel (2009), Norway (2012), New Zealand (2000)
Pest status in Honduras	Present (EPPO, Online; CABI CPC, Online). It is mainly found in the Central Eastern Region where the largest area of vegetable production is concentrated.
Pest status in the EU	Absent (EPPO, Online; CABI CPC, Online)
Host status on *Momordica charantia L.*	According to the Pest categorization of *Thrips palmi* (EFSA, 2019), *Momordica charantia* is one of the main host plants of *Thrips palmi.*
PRA information	Pest Risk Assessments currently available: • Final group pest risk analysis for thrips and orthotospoviruses on fresh fruit, vegetable, cut-flower and foliage imports (Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, 2017) • Pest categorisation of *Thrips palmi* (EFSA Scientific Opinion, 2019)
Interceptions (Europhyt/ Traces NT)	There is a single interception of *T. palmi* on *M. charantia* fruits originating from Honduras in November 2019.
Surveillance information	The National Service of Agrifood Health and Safety (SENASA), through its Department of Diagnosis, Surveillance and Phytosanitary Campaigns, implements the Phytosanitary Epidemiological Surveillance Program since the second half of 2016. For *T. palmi,* there is a specific sampling methodology in the field as well as instalment of 10 blue sticky traps per field. Sampling in areas under phytosanitary control is carried out weekly, starting from the establishment of the crop and until the beginning of the harvest. Field audits are carried out by the SENASA Technical staff.

Country specific information

A.1.1.1. Pest pressure in the production area

Temperature range between 20°C and 30°C which is an optimal range for multiplication of *T. palmi*.

Thrips palmi is under official surveillance (i.e. audits of monitoring in the field are carried out systematically following the points specified in the Good Agricultural Practices Programme of Honduras see dossier sections 1 and 6). *T. palmi* is widespread in the area of production and is considered by farmers a phytosanitary problem. The frequency and the number of sprays are high probably underlying high pest pressure in the field.

Thrips in *M. charantia* production fields belonging to two species i.e. *Frankliniella occidentalis* and *T. palmi* are present since the beginning of the first flowers in the crop and during harvests. Specific data on *T. palmi* population dynamics in *M. charantia* fields in Honduras are not available. Limited monitoring data of thrips during a production cycle of *M. charantia* were used (see dossier sections 7 and 8).

Uncertainties:

- There are limited data on population dynamics of *T. palmi* on *M. charantia.*
- Since identification of thrips at species level is difficult in the field, it is possible that field observations of thrips refer to other species than *T. palmi* (e.g. mixtures of *F. occidentalis* and *T. palmi*)

A.1.1.2. Evaluation of measures applied in the field

The main control measures applied in the field until harvest are official inspections, monitoring, application of insecticides and inspection during harvesting.

Momordica charantia fields are inspected by farmers and phytosanitary inspectors throughout the growing season on a weekly basis. Application of insecticides occurs at weekly intervals. Insecticides applied based on a specific schedule plan. A sample of efficacy data following a weekly scheduled application plan shows that efficacy range from 35% to 84% during the production stage of the crop and from 33% to 100% during the development and flowering period of the crop (Tables A.1, A.2).

Uncertainties:

- Specific efficacy data are either not available or are limited

Table A.1: Overview, evaluation and uncertainties of measures applied in the field against *Thrips palmi* on *Momordica charantia* fruits from Honduras designated for export to the EU

Measures applied in the field		
Risk mitigation measure	**Description of applied measure**	**Evaluation and uncertainties**
Export to EU during specific period of the year	There is an intentional 3- to 5-month gap (between June and October) in which *M. charantia* fruits are not produced and exported to the EU.	Aim to intervene in production sites, use measures to avoid high population densities Uncertainties • Is not clear if this method is applied for *T. palmi* or for other pests
Pest specific monitoring	There is a specific monitoring programme of the fields that is supervised by SENASA Technical staff. Monitoring occurs weekly throughout the production cycle of the crop and samples are taken for laboratory examination.	Given that Honduras is applying a calendar-based scheme (almost at a weekly basis), it is unclear what the monitoring data are used for.

Measures applied in the field		
Risk mitigation measure	**Description of applied measure**	**Evaluation and uncertainties**
Chemical control	Various insecticides are frequently applied (see details in Table A.2 here below).	The frequency of insecticide applications is very high in 130 days, 32 applications, ca. every 4 days). Based on efficacy data provided, thrips' population build up very rapidly. Uncertainties Number of thrips recorded after insecticide application, may also include other species like *F. occidentalis*
Biological control	Biological control agents are not applied (dossier section 6). Nonetheless, there are naturally occurring control agents in the area of *M. charantia* production.	
Protected cultivation	Production in greenhouse is in an experimental phase (dossier section 6); however currently, there are no *M. charantia* fruits exported from protected cultivation in Honduras.	

Table A.2: Overview of insecticides and other phytosanitary products used for the control of *Thrips palmi* in *Momordica charantia* fields in Honduras based on the information provided in sections of the dossier 1, 2, 7 and 8

Insecticides and other phytosanitary products used to control *Thrips palmi*			
Product	**Type of product**	**Efficacy as reported (see Annex E1 in dossier)**	**Efficacy Evaluation by the Panel**
Abamectin	Translaminar insecticide	Not reported	High effect
Emamectin Benzoate	Translaminar insecticide	Not reported	Low effect
Neem Extract		66–90%	Medium effect
Sulfur (Table E1)	Contact	33–66%	Medium effect
Cinnamon oil 40% Clove oil 10%	Vegetable Contact oil	33–66%	Low effect
Thiametoxam	Systemic insecticide	66–90%	High on thrips
Imidacloprid	Systemic insecticide	66–90%	High on thrips
Lambda-cyhalothrin	Pyrethroid contact	Not reported	Medium effect
Garlic Extract	Repellent	Not reported	Uncertain-low
Flupyradifurone	Systemic	Not reported	Medium effect
Fatty acids/Potassium salts	Contact	Not reported	Medium effect
Extract of citrus peels	Repellent	Not reported	Uncertain-low-medium effect
Spinosad	Contact	66–90%	High on thrips
Spinetoram	Contact	66–90%	High on thrips
Garlic extract and Quassia	Contact insecticide	Not reported	Medium
Vegetal oils	Contact (oil)	33–66%	Low effect
Natural pyrethrine	Contact	Not reported	Medium
Chlorantraniliprole	Ingestion and contact	Not reported	No effect
Beauveria bassiana	Entomopathogenic fungus	Not reported	Low medium
Bacillus thuringiensis	Bacteria	Not reported	No effect

A.1.1.3. Evaluation of measures applied in the packing house

The main control measures applied in the packing house are: (a) inspection before processing, (b) brushing and air blowing, (c) washing and (d) pest inspections before packing.

When *M. charantia* fruits are delivered to packing houses, quality control (QC) officer will take samples to inspect the quality and pest infestation on fruits. If the quality of *M. charantia* fruits is lower than standard or any pest infestation notice over standard, the fruits will be refused to process in the packing house. However, data on frequency of rejections at packing houses were not made available. Fruits are brushed and air blown individually before washing with sanitising products such as peroxyacetic acid. However, these practices are not indented to remove pests such as thrips but mainly for disinfecting fruits. Finally, samples of fruits will be inspected by packing house personnel for signs of insect infestation (Table A.3).

Uncertainties:

- Data on efficacy of the above methods in removing *T. palmi* from fruits were not made available.

Table A.3: Overview of post-harvest measures used in *Momordica charantia* packing houses in Honduras based on the information provided in sections of the dossier 1, 2, 7 and 8

Overview of post-harvest measures applied		
Risk mitigation measure	**Description of applied measure**	**Evaluation and uncertainties**
Inspection	Fruits are visually inspected in the field before transport.	This method is intended mainly as first filter to discard fruits infested by pests or do not fulfil quality (visual) requirements. As such, it is not aimed to detect *T. palmi*. This method will only detect heavily infested fruits showing clear symptoms of infestation.
Transport	The collected fruits are transported in vehicles with airtight cargo compartment.	
Inspection upon arrival to the packing house	Reception at the packing plant: Upon arrival at the packing facility, the transport conditions are reviewed, pest monitoring is done and the entry or rejection of the fruit is decided.	This method is intended mainly as first filter to discard fruits infested by pests or do not fulfil quality (visual) requirements. As such, is not aimed to detect *T. palmi*. This method will only detect heavily infested fruits showing clear symptoms of infestation.
Sorting/Classification	Once the fruit enters the packinghouse, they proceed to the selection and cleaning process. At this stage, possible physical damages are detected. The selection parameters consist of separating all those fruits that present deformations, inappropriate colour or any type of damage that detracts value and quality.	This method is intended mainly as first filter to discard fruits infested by pests or do not fulfil quality (visual) requirements. As such, is not aimed to detect *T. palmi*. This method will only detect heavily infested fruits showing clear symptoms of infestation.
Brushing	The fruit is brushed	The brushing has no effect on eggs as eggs are laid inside the fruit tissue, especially when using soft brushing. Brushing has low to intermediate effect on larvae and adults. Brushed adults may not be killed and therefore re-infest other fruits in the packing station. Efficacy data are not provided.

Overview of post-harvest measures applied		
Risk mitigation measure	**Description of applied measure**	**Evaluation and uncertainties**
Washing with pressurised water	The whole fruit is washed with pressurised water in order to eliminate any live insects that may appear, this is done manually to each individual fruit.	The effect of water on insects is uncertain or very low Pressurised washing has little effect on *T. palmi* eggs. Data on the efficacy of this method are not provided.
Submersion in water (1st)	The fruits are subjected to a post-harvest treatment which consists of submerging the fruit in a container containing a water solution with an undefined disinfectant.	The phytosanitary product is not defined. Immersion has little effect on *T. palmi* eggs. If water is not refreshed frequently, there is a risk of re-infesting clean material. Data on the efficacy of this method are not provided.
Submersion in water (2nd)	15 min post-harvest immersion treatment in cold water (approx. 4–8°C) with sodium hypochlorite.	There is no effect on *T. palmi* eggs and also on other life stages of the pest. If water is not refreshed frequently, there is a risk of re-infesting clean material. Data on the efficacy of this method are not provided
Pest inspection	A 15% sample of the fruits that is intended to be packaged is inspected for *T. palmi.*	

A.1.2. Information from interceptions

There is a single interception reported in Europhyt/TRACES-NT (1995–2020) of *T. palmi* on *Momordica* fruits originating from Honduras, in November 2019.

A.1.3. Overall likelihood of pest freedom

Rating of the likelihood of pest freedom	**Very frequently pest free** (based on the Median)				
Percentile of the distribution	5%	25%	Median	75%	95%
Proportion of pest free fruits*	9,406 out of 10,000 fruits	9,749 out of 10,000 fruits	**9,884** out of 10,000 fruits	9,957 out of 10,000 fruits	9,994 out of 10,000 fruits
Proportion of infested fruits*	6 out of 10,000 fruits	43 out of 10,000 fruits	**116** out of 10,000 fruits	251 out of 10,000 fruits	594 out of 10,000 fruits
Summary of the information used for the evaluation	**Possibility that the pest could become associate with the commodity** Environmental conditions in Honduras are optimal for *T. palmi* development. *Thrips palmi* is widespread in the area of production and is considered by farmers a phytosanitary problem. The frequency and the number of sprays is very high probably underlying high infestation in the field. Thrips are recorded on *M. charantia* plants throughout a growing cycle.				

	Measures taken against the pest and their efficacy The main control measures applied in the field until harvest are official inspections, monitoring, application of insecticides and inspection during harvesting. Efficacy of the applied insecticides ranges from 35% to 84% during the production stage of the crop and from 33% to 100% during the development and flowering period of the crop (Dossier sections 7 and 8). Measures in the packing house include inspection before processing, brushing and air blowing, washing and pest inspections before packing. Measures in the packing house target mainly adults and larvae and have minimal effect on eggs. **Interception records** There is a single interception reported in Europhyt/Traces-NT (1995–2020) of *T. palmi* on *M. charantia* fruits originating from Honduras, in November 2019. **Shortcomings of current measures/procedures** Application of insecticides is mainly performed on a calendar-like basis. Continuous use of insecticides is likely to cause development of resistant populations of *T. palmi.* Most measures applied in the packing house are not likely to have an effect on eggs that may be present on fruits. **Main uncertainties** There are limited data on population dynamics of *T. palmi* on *M. charantia*. Since identification of thrips at species level is difficult in the field, it is possible that field observations of thrips refer to other species than *T. palmi* (e.g. mixtures of *F. occidentalis* and *T. palmi*) Specific efficacy data for field applied measures are either limited or not available. Data on efficacy of the methods applied in the packing house in removing *T. palmi* from fruits are not available. The level of insecticide resistance against the insecticides applied in Honduras is uncertain

*: Numbers rounded off to the nearest whole number.

A.1.3.1. Reasoning for a scenario which would lead to a reasonably low number of infested consignments

Pest pressure

- The surrounding environment provides very few hosts for *T. palmi* (i.e. population sources)
- There is general pest management in place for thrips in agricultural areas where *M. charantia* is cultivated
- Natural biological control agents are very active and preserved and keep *T. palmi* controlled
- Thrips monitored are not always *T. palmi*. There are other species of thrips (*F. occidentalis*)

Field measures

- Regular and frequent inspection/monitoring targeted to *T. palmi*
- Exports match harvest periods where pest pressure is low
- There is an appropriate timing and use of active ingredients to control *T. palmi*

Measures in the packing house

- Low number of *T. palmi* flying inside the packing house
- Inspections at packing house and initial sorting of fruits are conducted properly and are effective in detecting and discarding infested fruits
- Cleaning measures (with water and other products, manually or using machines) are effective against *T. palmi* and render pest-free fruits
- Proper replacement of water and other products in the washing area
- Additives and other products used have an effect on the mortality of *T. palmi*
- Large proportion of infestation is in adult stage and/or juveniles (mobile stages)

A.1.3.2. Reasoning for a scenario which would lead to a reasonably high number of infested consignments

Pest pressure

- Density per/plant in examples provided seem to be high and recover very high after pesticide treatments which indicate high background infestation.
- The surrounding environment provides many hosts for *T. palmi*.
- There are uncontrolled sites where the pest occurs (e.g. and eggplant plantation without efficient control).
- Environment contains natural biological control agents are not active and preserved to control *T. palmi* due to poor management in other crops.
- Most monitored thrips are *T. palmi*.

Measures in the field

- Irregular inspection/monitoring and occasional inspections.
- Exports do not match harvest periods where pest pressure is low.
- There is an inadequate timing and use of active ingredients that are not efficient against *T. palmi*.

Measures in the packing house

- High number of *T. palmi* flying inside the packing house.
- Inspections at packing house and initial sorting of fruits are not conducted properly and are not effective in detecting and discarding infested fruits.
- Cleaning measures (with water and other products, manually or using machines) are not effective against *T. palmi* and do not render pest-free fruits.
- Poor replacement of water and other products in the washing area.
- Additives and other products used do not have an effect on the mortality of *T. palmi*.
- Large proportion of infestation are eggs.

A.1.3.3. Reasoning for a central scenario equally likely to over- or underestimate the number of infested consignments (Median)

- The surrounding environment provides sufficient hosts for *T. palmi*.
- Most monitored thrips are likely to be *T. palmi*.
- Insecticides are applied on a regular basis.
- Procedures in the packinghouse are effective in removing larvae and adult stages of *T. palmi* and detecting infested fruits.

A.1.3.4. Reasoning for the precision of the judgement describing the remaining uncertainties (1st and 3rd quartile/interquartile range)

- Identification of thrips at species level is difficult in the field and observations of thrips may refer to other species than *T. palmi* (e.g. mixtures of *F. occidentalis* and *T. palmi*) and leading to either over- or underestimations of *T. palmi* pressure in the field.
- Specific efficacy data for field applied measures are either limited or not available.
- Data on efficacy of the methods applied in the packing house in removing *T. palmi* from fruits are not available.
- It is uncertain to what extent infestation reported in the field on vegetative plant parts (e.g. leaves) is related to infestation numbers on the fruits.
- The level of insecticide resistance against the insecticides applied in Honduras is uncertain.
- The clarification is given by the level of uncertainty which is higher for the values below the median.

A.1.3.5. Elicitation outcomes of the assessment of the pest freedom for *Thrips palmi*

The following tables show the elicited values for pest freedom in *Momordica charantia* fruits according to a three-step approach (i.e. estimating pest pressure, effectiveness of the measures applied in the field and in the packing house) (Table A.4) to come to a final estimation of likelihood of pest freedom (Table A.5, Figures A.1, A.2)

Table A.4: Elicited values to estimate the likelihood of pest freedom (i.e. no. of pest free fruits out of 10,000, elicited as 10,000 minus no. of infested fruits) and the fitted distributions in a three-step approach (i.e. Import risk: $R_{import} = p_{pressure} \times p_{field}/10{,}000 \times p_{packing}/10{,}000$; Pest freedom: $PF_{import} = 10{,}000\ R_{import}$)

Percentile	Parameter	1%	25%	50%	75%	99%	Fitted distribution
Elicited values for pest pressure	$p_{pressure}$	300	1,700	3,000	4,500	6,000	Beta general (1.0545, 1.1214, 240, 6100)
Elicited values for measures in the field	p_{field}	500	1,800	3,000	4,700	6,700	Beta general (1.0282, 1.3492, 446, 6900)
Elicited values for measures in the packinghouse	$P_{packinghouse}$	100	900	1,700	2,800	4,000	Beta general (0.95631, 1.2207, 75, 4100)
Resulting model values for the import risk after Monte Carlo simulation	r_{import}	8.2	40	108	253	943	Calculated with @Risk version 7.6
As pest-free fruits		9,057	9,747	9,892	9,960	9,991.8	

Table A.5: The uncertainty distribution of fruits free of *Thrips palmi* per 10,000 fruits calculated by taking into account a three-step procedure and according to elicited values in Table A.4

Percentile	1%	2.5%	5%	10%	17%	25%	33%	50%	67%	75%	83%	90%	95%	97.5%	99%
Three-step approach for pest freedom	9,057	9,225	9,371	9,531	9,654	9,747	9,811	9,892	9,942	9,960	9,975	9,985	9,991.8	9,995.2	9,997.2
EKE results	9,039	9,250	9,406	9,557	9,666	9,749	9,806	9,884	9,937	9,957	9,974	9,986	9,993.7	9,997.1	9,999.0

The EKE results are the fitted values for a Weibull distribution (0.89484, 174.37) fitted with @Risk version 7.5.

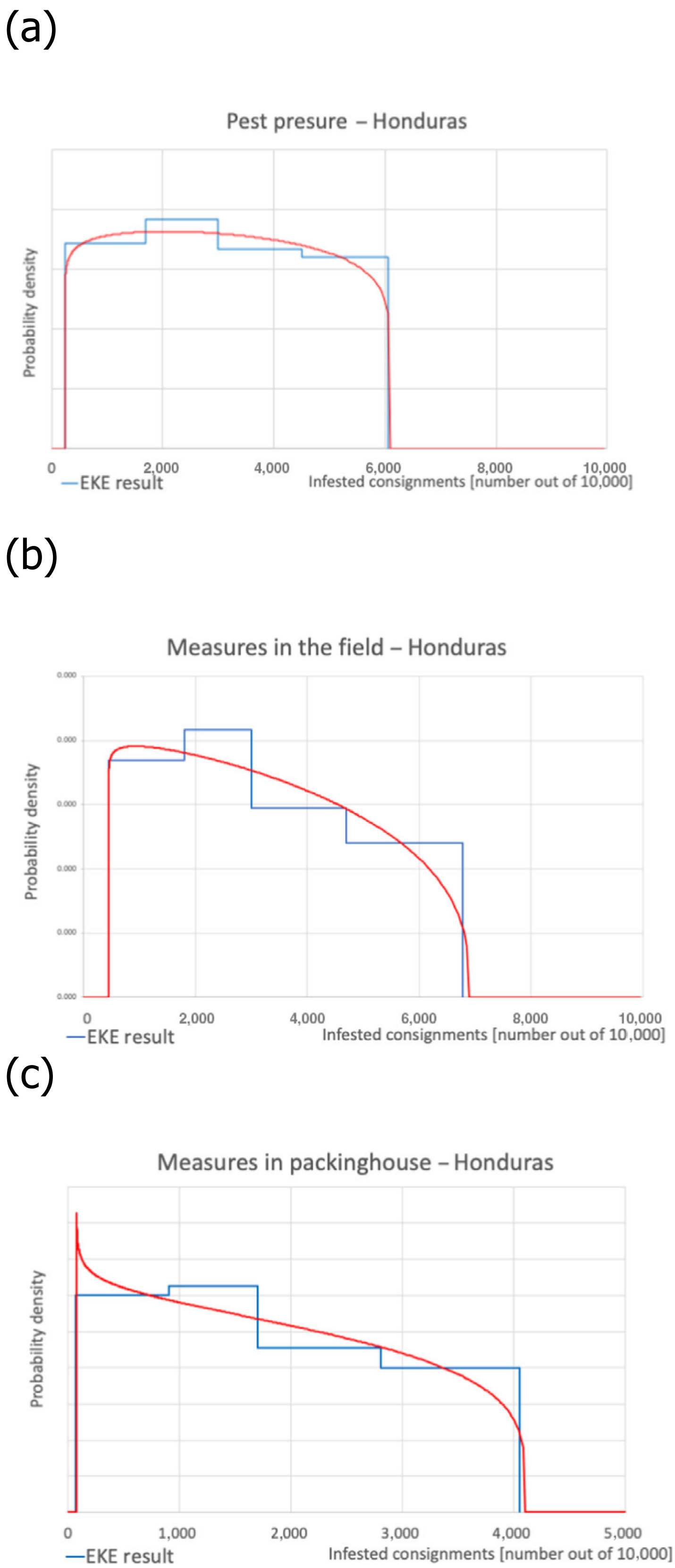

Figure A.1: Probability densities for the number of pest-free *Momordica charantia* fruits (x-axis) out of 10,000 designated for export to the EU introduced according to (a) estimated pest pressure in the field; (b) measures applied in the field; and (c) measures applied in the packing house for *Thrips palmi*

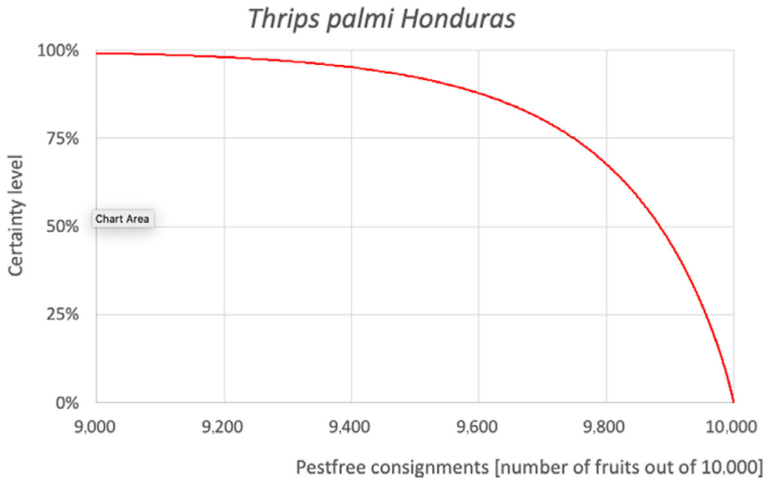

Figure A.2: Elicited certainty (y-axis) of the number of pest-free Momordica charantia fruits (x-axis; log-scaled) out of 10,000 plants designated for export to the EU introduced from Honduras for *Thrips palmi* visualised as descending distribution function. Horizontal lines indicate the percentiles (starting from the bottom 5%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 95%). The Panel is 95% sure that 9406 or more fruits per 10,000 will be free from *T. palmi*

A.1.4. Reference list

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Appendix B – Web of Science All Databases Search String

In the table below, the search string used in Web of Science is reported.

Web of Science	TOPIC: ("Momordica" OR "*Momordica charantia*" OR "*M. charantia*" OR "Momordica anthelmintica Guin." OR "Momordica elegans Salisb." OR "Momordica muricata Willd." OR "Momordica operculata Vell." OR "Momordica senegalensis Lam." OR "bitter gourd" OR "bitter melon" OR "Cucurbitaceae" OR "balsam apple" OR "balsam pear" OR "bitter balsam apple" OR "bitter cucumber" OR "bitter melon" OR "carilla gourd" OR "paria" OR "wild balsam-apple" OR "cucumber" OR "melon") AND TOPIC: ("*Thrips palmi*" OR "melon thrips" OR "*Thrips palmi* Karny, 1925" OR "Chloethrips aureus Ananthrakrishnan & Jagadish, 1967" OR "Thrips clarus Moulton, 1928" OR "Thrips gossypicola (Priesner, 1939)" OR "Thrips gracilis Ananthrakrishnan & Jagadish, 1968" OR "Thrips leucadophilus Priesner, 1936" OR "Thrips nilgiriensis Ramakrishna 1928" OR "Oriental thrips" OR "southern yellow thrips") AND TOPIC: ("pest pressure" OR "population build-up" OR "pesticide application$" OR "pesticide$" OR "risk reduction option$" OR "mitigation measure$" OR "efficac*" OR "resistance" OR "population dynamic$" OR "phytosanitary product$" OR "registered pesticide$" OR "high pressure water*" OR "air pressur*" OR "population dynamic$" OR "field densit*" OR "occurrence" OR "monitor*" OR "sticky trap$" OR "sticky trap$ efficac*") AND TOPIC: ("Honduras")