Introduction

Global trade of produce carries an increasing risk for spreading disease to regions where the disease-causing pests are absent. Therefore, lists of organisms considered to be of quarantine importance to specific countries or regions (e.g. the EPPO A1 and A2 lists for the European Union and Mediterranean regions; www.eppo.org) are compiled by national officials. However, detection and identification of these pests are often problematic due to the absence of reliable reference material and data. Chances in species taxonomy and discrepancies in the naming system used between lists for a species also contributes to miscommunication of species identity between countries.

To address the problems described above, the Dutch government and the European Union funded the establishment of an online identification and reference database, Q-bank (www.q-bank.eu), for pests of importance to the EPPO region. This database spans all the important plant pests groups, namely Bacteria, Fungi, Insects, Invasive Plants, Nematodes, Phytoplasmas and Viruses & viroids species of quarantine importance and their closest relatives. The descriptions of the items in the databases are an indispensable tool to identify and detect harmful quarantine organisms.

Conclusions

The Q-bank database is a valuable tool for national plant protection organisations, general inspection bodies, private laboratories and researchers, with links to data from vouchered specimens supplemented with sequence data and links to EPPO information sheets. Polyphasic identification increases confidence in the determined identity and allows the user to use as little or as much information as is available in the database for identification.

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