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SHIPMENTS OF BUILDING MATERIALS FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Two countries in the region have reported serious quarantine problems with the importation of building materials from the People's Republic of China.

In **Guam**, Environmental Protection Agency staff intercepted a consignment of rock aggregate from the People's Republic of China intended for use in a new resort complex under construction. EPA inspectors found live nematodes, parasites and gravel mixed with soil, among other problems". Guam EPA says that no fumigation had been carried out, nor were any permits issued.

A similar report comes from **Tonga** on building materials from the People's Republic of China intended for a new hotel being built near the airport'. The first consignment was fumigated over a two-month period. The second, 2500 tonnes of sand supposedly from 200 metres below sea level, contained live crickets, saprophytic nematodes, seeds, roots and rhizomes of grasslike plants. A solution to this problem has yet to be devised.

Tonga quarantine officials have also intercepted a large wood-boring beetle in dunnage and wood from large packing cases containing machinery and other goods from the People's Republic of China. The beetle, a longicorn similar to *Triirachys orientalis*, had created long winding tunnels of up to 10 mm in diameter, and would certainly cause serious problems if it had been allowed past quarantine. All wood was fumigated with methyl bromide before being disposed of.

Clearly, only the vigilance of quarantine authorities in both countries prevented what could have been a major introduction of new pests. All quarantine authorities in the region are notified of the dangers associated with the importation of building materials and equipment.

Source:

- 1) *Pacific Magazine* (March/April 1992): p. 30.
- 2) Quarantine and Quality Management Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries, P.O. Box 88 1, Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Fax: (676) 24 271.

