

Guatemala to aid growers battling coffee fungus

February 8 2013

Guatemala decreed an agricultural emergency Friday because of a coffee tree fungus that is ravaging crops and could cost the sector up to \$400 million this year.

The disease triggered by the fungus is called [leaf rust](#), and causes coffee trees to lose their leaves. The result is fewer and lower-quality beans.

The blight is [wreaking havoc](#) in much of impoverished Central America.

The first step taken under the decree will be the disbursement of \$13.7 million in aid to small-scale growers to help them with supplies and logistics, Agriculture Minister Elmer Lopez said.

The government will also dispatch technicians to help growers fight the fungus.

About 70 percent of all of Guatemala's coffee-growing land is now beset with leaf rust, the National Coffee Association said.

The crisis could cost up to \$400 million because of lost exports, and 72,000 jobs, out of a total of 500,000 generated during the [harvest season](#).

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