

Brazil to Temporarily Release Transgenic Mosquitoes to Combat Zika



Rio de Janeiro, April 13 (RHC-Xinhua) -- Brazil will temporarily allow genetically modified mosquitoes to be set free to help reduce the population of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes that transmit the Zika virus, Brazilian health authorities said on Tuesday.

The National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) announced on Tuesday that it will grant Oxitec, the UK subsidiary of U.S. synthetic biology company Intrexon, special permission to free the transgenic mosquitoes, known as OX513A, once tests among some communities give satisfactory results in combating Zika.

Anvisa assured in a press release that they should create a regulatory framework capable of evaluating the products definitively as well as other similar products that are being developed. "It involves technology that is innovative and different to all the other regulated products up to now."

The National Technical Commission for Biosecurity (CTNBio) gave the insect the green light after considering it as technologically inoffensive. The mosquitoes were created in a laboratory where the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes' eggs receive a micro-injection of DNA with two genes - one for producing a

protein that impedes the mosquitoes' descendants from reaching adulthood and the other for them to be identified under a specific type of light.

Some male transgenic mosquitoes have recently been released into nature in a test. They are expected to procreate with female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, the ones that are responsible for incubating and spreading dengue, chikungunya and Zika. It is hoped that the mosquitos of this procreation will die before reaching adulthood, thus reducing the total population.

Since an outbreak in Latin American last year, Zika has spread to all of Brazil's 27 states, mainly affecting the northeastern states.

The Brazilian government decreed a state of emergency in November 2015 and has dispatched servicemen to search for and eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes' possible breeding grounds.

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