First record of *Aleuroclava psidii* (Singh) and *Aleurotrachelus tuberculatus* Singh (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae) in East Africa

D. Guastella\(^1\)*, L.S. Tajebe\(^1\), G. Evans\(^2\), F.P. Fovo\(^3\), C. Rapisarda\(^1\) & J.P. Legg\(^3\)

\(1\)Dipartimento di Gestione dei Sistemi Agroalimentari e Ambientali, Sezione Entomologia applicata, Università degli Studi, Via Santa Sofia 100, 95123 Catania, Italy

\(2\)USDA APHIS NIS, BARC-West, Beltville, Maryland, U.S.A.

\(3\)International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, P.O. Box 34441, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Two Asian whiteflies, *Aleurotrachelus tuberculatus* Singh 1933 and *Aleuroclava psidii* (Singh 1931), are recorded for the first time in Africa. Both species were found on *Psidium guajava* L. (Myrtaceae) in the Coast and Dar es Salaam regions of Tanzania. It is not possible to determine when these species might have been introduced, due to the absence of a routine monitoring system for pest introductions in East African countries. However, no records exist of their presence or damage caused to plants in Africa, therefore they have been likely introduced recently. In addition, *Aleurodicus dispersus* Russell, a widespread, polyphagous whitefly species, was also collected on guava. This species was introduced to Tanzania in 2003 from a putative Asian origin. This fact, coupled with the new introductions reported here, suggests that a pathway exists for the importation of exotic insects or noxious pest species from Asia to East Africa.

Whiteflies comprise some of the most important pests of agricultural systems in the world (Van Lenteren & Noldus 1990; Gerling & Mayer 1996). They occur in warm climates, where they are pests of both herbaceous and woody plants, as well as in temperate climates where they cause tremendous damage to protected crops (Jones 2002). Over the years, worldwide trade in plants has increased the risk of introducing new whitefly species in places far away from their native area (Pelizzari & Šimala 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa, a few species of whiteflies cause enormous economic losses and represent a continuing threat to food security. This is especially true for the whitefly *Bemisia tabaci* (Gennadius), which in addition to causing direct damage to several crops, also transmits a large number of disease-causing plant viruses. Arguably, the single most economically important group of *B. tabaci*-transmitted viruses in Africa are the cassava mosaic begomiviruses (family *Begomiviridae*; genus *Begomovirus*), which cause losses exceeding US$1 billion annually (Thresh *et al.* 1997; Legg *et al.* 2006). Other whitefly pests occurring in Africa cause damage mainly through feeding activity and the consequent indirect effects of sooty mould growth that occurs on infested plants. Two examples include the citrus woolly whitefly (*Aleurothrixus floccosus* (Maskell)) and the spiralling whitefly (*Aleurodicus dispersus* Russell). In contrast to *B. tabaci*, both of these species are of Neotropical origin and were inadvertently introduced to the African continent where they became highly successful invasive species. Many African countries have poorly-resourced quarantine systems and limited research expertise in entomology. These two conditions provide a favourable environment for the undetected introduction of exotic insects, which may subsequently become pests. Tanzania provides a typical example, where little is currently known about the extant diversity of the whitefly fauna, but where there are unconfirmed reports of the occurrence of several previously unreported exotic whitefly species (D. Gerling, pers. comm.). The Coast Region is one of the 30 regions of Tanzania. This region surrounds the urban region of Dar es Salaam, which lies on the Indian Ocean coast. The city of Dar es Salaam, with a population of nearly four million, is one of the largest ports on the East African coast and handles a large volume of trade with Africa to the East. The Tanzanian economy is dominated by the agricultural sector. Smallholder farmers predominate and most of them do not practise improved farming. As a result, yields are relatively low. Main crops in the coastal

\*Author for correspondence. E-mail: devid.guastella@gmail.com