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Blue mould Detected
in Vuelta Abajo

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1445:tobacco:

1982

by Lionel martin

havana, dec 20, reuter -- blue mould, the plague that devastated cuba's 1979-80 tobacco crop, has been detected in the renowned vuelta-abajo tobacco growing region of eastern cuba, according to the newspaper guerrillero.

the discovery has caused consternation among state and private tobacco growers who recall how the plague spread rapidly throughout the zone in 1979 and destroyed three quarters of the tobacco crop.

the blue mould, the newspaper said, was discovered early this month in a +clandestine+ tobacco plot in an inaccessible mountainous area. since the blue mould outbreak it has been illegal to grow tobacco on small plots for personal consumption. the government believes that homegrown tobacco is more apt to be infected by plague, inasmuch as plot owners do not have the means to comply with the strict sanitary norms set down by the cuban government.

news of the detection of blue mould comes as tobacco farmers in pinar del rio, where the vuelta-abajo region is located, report that they have already planted about half of the planned 41 000 hectares for the 1982/83 tobacco campaign.

--more Lem/syl

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at a meeting with farmers last thursday, jaine crombet, head of the communist party in the region, said that +the plantations are in magnificent condition despite negligence which provoked some focci of blue mould.+

guerrillero charged that +there is an absence of controls and checkup on the part of state and farm officials+ in regard to the fight against the blue mould.

state and private farms are instructed to make timely use of chemicals such as ridomil and zineb and to immediately burn tobacco plants once the leaves are picked.

private farmers produce 75 per cent of the tobacco in pinar del rio.

--reuter lem/syl