



Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
CHARLES H. BRONSON, Commissioner

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October 31, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Richard Gaskalla, Director
Division of Plant Industry

SUBJECT: Citrus Greening (Huanglongbing) Assessment

Please find attached the above subject document that captures the key points from a conference call held with key research scientist and regulatory officials that are involved with the citrus greening situation here in Florida.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the United States Department of Agriculture will continue to work closely with the industry and other stakeholders to take the steps outlined in this assessment which are designed to mitigate the impact of citrus greening on Florida citrus.

Should you have any questions please contact me.

RDG/dc

Attachment

cc: Craig Meyer

Huanglongbing: An Assessment of the Disease in Florida, October 2005

In late August 2005, huanglongbing (HLB) or citrus greening was detected in Miami-Dade Co., Florida by a team of state and federal scientists and survey specialists. By mid-October, as a result of additional delimiting survey this serious disease of citrus was found distributed in many residential properties stretching over 160 miles from Miami-Dade Co. north to St. Lucie Co. Commercial citrus groves infected with HLB are located in Palm Beach and Hendry Cos.

The large number and widespread distribution of HLB infestations in Florida is very similar to the pattern of initial detections of the disease in other countries where it has been introduced. The long length of time for disease symptoms to become visible and the long distance and rapid movement of the disease's bacterial causal agent by its insect vector, the Asian citrus psyllid (*Diaphorina citri*), has led to a widespread establishment of the disease within just a few years.

A key question was raised about whether the disease could be eradicated from Florida's residential and commercial citrus resources. A group of scientists with expertise in HLB and other exotic pests discussed the feasibility of eradication with regulatory officials of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services on October 20, 2005. There was a consensus of the scientists that the estimated length of time of the disease's presence in Florida, difficulty of detecting infected trees in a timely manner, movement by a small innumerable insect vector and limitations of diagnostic tools precluded making eradication of the disease feasible.

There was also consensus by the scientists that several interim strategies should be implemented to assist the commercial citrus industry and owners of residential citrus plants on an immediate basis:

- Continuation of the state and federal program to survey and determine the disease's distribution in Florida.
- Develop and provide a strong education and training program to help all citrus owners recognize the symptoms of HLB. Those suspecting they have HLB will be encouraged to contact the appropriate first responders for further assistance.
- Immediately develop a program to protect Florida's citrus budwood source trees from HLB and a similar program for nursery stock to limit any spread of the disease on propagative material.
- The FDACS, USDA-APHIS-PPQ and University of Florida must maintain robust web sites to provide up-to-date information to inform the public on the current distribution, best management practices, science and regulatory policies on the disease and its insect vector as new informative is made available.

The scientists and regulatory officials agreed that much remains unknown about this disease. Although well-distributed throughout the citrus growing areas of the world, many key aspects of the disease and how to best manage it are still little known. This limitation of knowledge clearly hinders the immediate development of best management practices (BMPs) for the citrus industry. Much work will need to be done as rapidly as possible by many stakeholders to have more complete and well understood BMPs available.

For the immediate future, it was agreed that in commercial groves there is a benefit to removing trees diagnosed as positive for HLB. It would also be prudent to remove trees that have a similar appearance as the diagnosed trees, much like unthrifty trees affected by CTV and other problems that are similarly removed to improve a block or grove. Homeowners are encouraged to remove

HLB-infected trees as well. The disease will result in declining tree health coupled with poor tasting fruits, followed by a loss of fruits altogether and then tree death.

Scientists, regulatory officials and commercial citrus industry representatives must continue to work together to develop a comprehensive management program for this new exotic and pernicious disease of citrus in Florida and United States.

Participants on the 20 October 2005 Teleconference Call:

Dr. Wayne Dixon, Chief, Bureau of ENPP, Plant Industry, FDACS

Dr. Phil Berger, National Science Program Leader, Molecular Diagnostics & Biotechnology
Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, USDA-APHIS-PPQ

Dr. John V. da Graça, Interim Center Director, Texas A&M University-Kingsville Citrus Center

Dr. Stephen Garnsey, retired Plant Pathologist, USDA Agricultural Research Service

Richard Gaskalla, Director, Division of Plant Industry, FDACS

Tim Gast, Citrus Horticulturist, United States Sugar Corporation

Dr. Tim Gottwald, Research Leader/Plant Pathology, USDA, Agricultural Research Service,
U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory

Paul Hornby, State Operations Support Officer, USDA-APHIS-PPQ

Craig Meyer, Deputy Commissioner, FDACS

Connie Riherd, Assistant Director, Division of Plant Industry, FDACS

Michael Shannon, State Plant Health Director, USDA-APHIS-PPQ