



Sunkist



Industry Alert

Dear Industry Members,

A very serious situation has come up regarding the movement of fruit throughout the State. This has to do with the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) and the potential for the industry to spread the bug in loads of bulk citrus headed to juice processing plants.

It is widely acknowledged that ACP is a difficult insect to detect, and even though extensive efforts are underway to detect ACP in southern California it is possible that ACP is currently present in counties outside the quarantine area in San Diego and Imperial counties.

Given the likelihood that ACP could be present in Riverside, Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura and all of San Diego and Imperial counties and the enormous consequences of spreading ACP we are asking the industry to clean ALL FRUIT, whether it originates from within or outside the current ACP quarantine area, BEFORE movement from the production area to juice plant or packing facilities.

Handlers should eliminate all plant parts including leaves, stems and debris from shipments of citrus within the state of California. We know this will increase costs for growers, but we hope the industry will view these added costs in the context of what it would be like to operate in a state completely infested with ACP.

Please join us in urging growers, handlers and haulers to act responsibly and to go above and beyond the normal course of doing business and thereby help prevent the spread of ACP.

Asian citrus psyllid, the vector for the deadly disease Huanglongbing (HLB), continues to be found in Southern Imperial and San Diego counties. At this time all new finds have been within the boundaries of the existing quarantine. With new growth coming on and fruit continuing to be harvested in and around the quarantine area, the risk of ACP being moved out of Southern California and becoming established in other areas of the state is greater than it has ever been.

CDFA, assisted by the County Ag Commissioners and USDA is doing everything within their authority to detect and prevent ACP from being transported out of the quarantine area. Their efforts are critical and appreciated, but ultimately the strongest line of defense is industry cooperation.

Over the past two weeks field harvested lemons from the quarantine area have left Imperial County in violation of compliance agreements. Inspectors have rejected several loads of lemons because they contained host material in the trailers. The compliance agreement which handlers and haulers must sign before moving product out of the quarantined area specifically states, that the "establishment shall process/clean regulated articles, in a manner

that eliminates all plant parts including leaves, stems and debris.” Further, “cleaning shall be done in a manner that eliminates all life stages of Asian citrus psyllid.” A copy of the compliance agreement is to accompany each shipment. Additionally, we understand some growers have added lemons from outside the quarantine area to loads originating from the quarantine area. CDFA and the counties have indicated that these types of shipments will not be permitted, since inspectors cannot verify the origin of the fruit or debris. We urge the industry to immediately stop this practice.

Two weeks ago, industry representatives from Florida Citrus Mutual and Texas Citrus Mutual joined California representatives from CCM, Sunkist, CCQC, and CDFA were in Washington, laying a foundation for additional manpower and dollars to fight ACP and HLB. In seeking assistance the group is stressing what the citrus industry is doing to help itself. Having individuals circumventing quarantine requirements and moving unclean fruit is unconscionable. It jeopardizes the ACP eradication program and the entire California citrus industry. This puts an undue burden on the inspectors and creates a huge loophole for potential violations and the spreading of ACP.

While we understand this request is controversial we make it with the industry’s best long term interests in mind. Preventing the spread of ACP and introduction of HLB must be the industry’s highest priority.