

FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION
DA-2009-32
July 9, 2009

SUBJECT: Citrus Greening Detected in Asian Citrus Psyllids in Yucatan, Mexico

TO: STATE AND TERRITORY AGRICULTURAL REGULATORY OFFICIALS

On June 26, 2009, the Mexican government detected the bacterium that causes citrus greening (CG), also called Huanglongbing (HLB), in Asian citrus psyllids (ACP), the vector of the disease, collected from backyard citrus in the town of Colonia Yucatan a El Cuyo, Municipality of Tizimín in the State of Yucatán, México. Mexican agricultural officials subsequently sent DNA extracts from the psyllids in question to the USDA for cross-comparison. On July 6, 2009, the USDA Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory in Beltsville, Maryland corroborated the findings made by Mexico. On July 8, 2009 Mexican officials reported through North American Plant Protection Organization that citrus greening was detected in psyllids from the State of Yucatan and that they have begun an intensive delimitation survey of host plants for possible symptoms of CG in the immediate vicinity in accordance with their emergency response plan <http://www.pestalert.org/oprDetail.cfm?oprID=384>.

Should any host plant test positive for the disease, Mexico will immediately eliminate the infected plants and take intensive systematic measures to control the psyllid vector. The detection of CG-infected psyllids on the Yucatan Peninsula raises concerns to citrus producers and consumers in both countries. The Yucatan Peninsula is approximately 400 miles by air from the Florida Keys, 700 miles by air from Texas and 1,800 miles by air from California.

APHIS' counterparts with the Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación (SAGARPA) Dirección General de Sanidad Vegetal (DGSV) notified the USDA about the suspect CG detection. APHIS previously provided technical assistance to DGSV on molecular diagnostics that included training specialists, translating testing protocols, supplying DNA controls, and loaning certain equipment. This has enabled DGSV to conduct testing locally. APHIS continues to work closely with DGSV to intensify ACP and citrus greening survey and suppression activities in Baja California and surrounding areas and to delimit the presence of ACP. The objective remains to work cooperatively with Mexico to determine the extent, if any, of ACP and CG infestation in the citrus growing areas of Mexico near the United States border.

APHIS continues to work closely with U.S. States, and stakeholders, and Mexico to develop an appropriate response to this situation. APHIS also has alerted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to enhance its vigilance while inspecting CG host plants and commodities.

For additional information about this detection, you may contact Patrick Gomes, National Coordinator, Citrus Health Response Program, at Area Code (919) 855-7313.

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