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USDA Creates Multi-Agency Emergency Response Framework to Combat Devastating Citrus Disease

USDA Providing \$1 million to Jump Start Citrus Response Framework

WASHINGTON, **December XX**, 2013—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced the creation of a new, unified emergency response framework to address Huanglongbing (HLB), a serious disease of citrus that affects several U.S. states and territories. This new framework will allow USDA and its many partners to better coordinate HLB resources, share information and develop operational strategies to maximize effectiveness.

“USDA listened to the citrus industry’s request for more urgency and greater coordination on the response to HLB and is implementing an emergency response structure,” said Secretary Tom Vilsack. “To jump start this initiative and affirm our commitment to industry, USDA is also providing \$1 million to be used in support of research projects that can bring practical and short-term solutions to the growers in their efforts to combat this disease. Through the Specialty Crop Research Initiative of the Farm Bill, USDA has provided \$9 million in research to blocking the ability of insects to spread HLB to healthy trees. We need Congress to quickly pass a new Farm, Food, and Jobs Bill that continues to support this kind of research to protect a crop worth more than \$3 billion in the last harvest.”

The new framework will bring together USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), along with state departments of agriculture and the citrus industry into a [Multi-Agency Coordination \(MAC\) Group for HLB](#). It will provide industry with a single contact for all the federal and state entities that work on citrus issues and better enable the collective to collaborate on policy decisions, establish priorities, allocate critical resources, and collect, analyze, and disseminate information.

The HLB MAC Group will also help coordinate Federal research with industry’s efforts to complement and fill research gaps, reduce unnecessary duplication, speed progress and more quickly provide practical tools for citrus growers to use.

HLB, also known as citrus greening, is named for the green, misshapen, and bitter-tasting fruit it causes. While this bacterial disease poses no danger to humans or animals, it has devastated millions of acres of citrus crops throughout the United States and abroad. In the United States, the entire States of Florida and Georgia are under quarantine for HLB, and portions of California, Louisiana, South Carolina and Texas are also under quarantine for the disease. The U.S. Territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are under HLB quarantines as well.

You can find more information about HLB and the HLB MAC Group on USDA's [Multi-Agency Response to Devastating Citrus Disease](#) website.

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