



Stakeholder Announcement

USDA Announces Huanglongbing Multi-agency Coordination Group's First Funding Allocations

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA), Huanglongbing Multi-agency Coordination Group (HLB MAC), led by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), today announced funding allocations of more than \$1.5 million to expand bio-control efforts directed towards fighting Huanglongbing also known as citrus greening. This is the first designation of funds by the HLB MAC Group since it was established by the Secretary of Agriculture in December 2013 and is their first step in fulfilling the commitment to providing practical tools and solutions to the citrus industry.

The funds allocated will enable USDA to sign cooperative agreements with Florida (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services), Texas (Texas Citrus Pest and Disease Management Corporation), and California (Citrus Research Board, California Department of Food and Agriculture). The result of these coordinated efforts will significantly increase the production of the parasitic wasp known to control the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) populations. The ACP is the pest that spreads HLB in citrus trees.

Research shows that biological control has yielded promising results for controlling ACP populations in areas where conventional insecticide treatments cannot be employed or sustained. The HLB MAC, charged with swiftly supporting and implementing the most promising methods for combating HLB, determined that expanding biocontrol production was a high priority short term solution.

The biological control agent *Tamarixia radiata* is a parasitic wasp known to attack and kill the ACP pest that transmits HLB to citrus trees.

Each state developed a biocontrol expansion plan that factors in regional elements in order to quickly bolster biocontrol production and release. This will expand the ability to control the ACP on a larger scale, especially in urban areas where citrus trees grow in yards as well as organic orchards.

USDA's efforts surrounding biocontrol date back to 2009 and it is essential that increased numbers be produced for large scale control of ACP in order to stop the spread of HLB. That is why the HLB MAC Group is funding the effort to significantly increase biocontrol production.

Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack stood up the HLB MAC in response to the citrus industry's request for more urgency and greater coordination in the response to HLB. Immediately, USDA established a new, unified emergency response framework to better position the Department to respond in a more agile, concerted and direct way to address both the immediate and long-term needs of the citrus industry. The Group includes representatives

from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the MAC lead agency, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), as well as State departments of agriculture and the citrus industry. The HLB MAC Group will help to coordinate and prioritize 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.