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Plant Protection Today: South Korea Grants Market Access to Texas Grapefruit

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The Market Is Worth \$5 Million Annually

By Greg Rosenthal

Texas grapefruit growers just gained access to a new international market in South Korea worth \$5 million annually. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) negotiated the technical details that will help ensure grapefruit exported from Texas are free from pests, such as the Mexican fruit fly. On June 27, 2024, South Korea's national plant protection organization—the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA)—officially announced the news.

“Texas Citrus Mutual would like to thank USDA APHIS Deputy Administrator Mark Davidson, Trade Director Lisa Kohl, and the entire team for its dedication and persistence in obtaining market access to South Korea for Texas grapefruit,” said Texas Citrus Mutual President Dale Murden. “The Texas citrus industry looks forward to providing Korea with delicious Texas grapefruit and a long, fruitful relationship.” Texas joined California and Florida to become the third State to export grapefruit to South Korea.

“This market access is a direct result of APHIS' negotiations over many years,” said USDA's Jenny Lester Moffitt, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. “Just as crucial were our dedicated efforts to maintain fruit fly pest-free areas in Texas, and collaboration with APQA to conduct a virtual site visit during the COVID-19 pandemic.”



USDA Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer Velia Fagetti conducts an export inspection on grapefruit from Texas.

Innovation by APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program was the key to navigating the site visit requirement. "The site visit is part of South Korea's regulatory process, and its goal is to ensure that the Texas industry will be able to meet the requirements of the export program," said Lisa Kohl, PPQ's Trade Director for South Korea, Japan, Viet Nam, and Taiwan. "We innovated during the pandemic

to allow the site visit to proceed virtually, so South Korean officials could stay safe and avoid international travel.”

Once APQA shared its export requirements, PPQ experts created PowerPoint presentations that included photos and videos to show those requirements were being met. The videos include PPQ staff conducting export inspections, as well as operations in packinghouses. When APQA submitted follow-up questions, PPQ employees created additional PowerPoint presentations with new photos and videos.

“While the virtual site visit probably added time to the overall market access approval process, it allowed us to complete this regulatory requirement successfully despite the limitations of travel during the pandemic,” Kohl said.

PPQ’s work to maintain fruit fly-free areas in Texas also played an important role in this accomplishment. These areas make it possible for Texas producers to export to South Korea without needing to apply costly treatments to the fruit.

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