



BROOKS TROPICALS

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via Facsimile 202-225-8456

March 21, 2000

The Honorable Peter R. Deutsch
204 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0920

RE: Citrus Canker

Dear Peter:

The Lime Industry believes it is the responsibility of both U.S.D.A. and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to prevent the dissemination of citrus canker in Dade County.

About February 11, 2000, I talked to Craig Meyer from FDACS regarding eradication of canker in South Florida. He stated that the program would be a two pronged attack to eradicate canker, starting both from Broward going south and Homestead going north to meet in Miami.

On February 22, 2000, Mike Stuart and I met with U.S.D.A. Deputy Secretary Rominger and FDACS representatives and were again told about the two pronged strategy.

On March 2, 2000, I met with Dr. Richard Dunkle and various U.S.D.A. representatives in Washington who indicated the program would move only from Broward to the South. At that meeting, Mike Stuart from Florida Fruit and Vegetable and I indicated that was not the plan we had been told about at the February 22nd meeting in Orlando and that this new plan would place the remainder of the lime industry in jeopardy.

On March 8, 2000, at the Florida Lime and Avocado Committee Meeting, Ken Bailey, the Canker Eradication Program Director, indicated that all of his surveyors had been moved from South Dade to Broward County.

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I indicated that this would leave the South Dade lime industry with no effective eradication program with the summer storm season coming. (Tropical storms are linked directly to the spread of canker.) Mike Hunt, a Committee member, indicated that backyard trees adjacent to a grove diagnosed with Canker in January were still standing after the grove had been pushed and burned.

On March 16th, Mr. Terry Smith, who represented that he was in charge of the South Dade canker eradication program, said to Mr. Mike Hunt that he had no surveyors in place in South Dade and knew of no South Dade eradication plan.

The summer storm season is coming. We have 1,400 acres of limes left in South Dade. To protect the remnants of the U.S. lime industry, a protection plan needs to be developed and implemented immediately. This plan needs to be public so industry can support it. The plan needs to be timely before the onset of tropical storm season. Finally, progress reports and benchmarks need to be in place to ensure the plan is accomplished (unlike the citrus canker public signage program which was very slow to be implemented).

Additionally, Mr. Hunt has the following concerns about the eradication program in South Dade. These concerns follow:

- 1) Positive trees are not being destroyed when confirmed. There are positive trees which have not been destroyed 60 days after they have been confirmed. Guidelines call for these trees to be destroyed, in place, as soon as they are confirmed.
- 2) "Exposed" residential trees near positive commercial groves are not being surveyed and action taken.
- 3) No plans have been announced to conduct an area-wide residential survey in the commercial growing area even though the grove surveys have been underway for 75 days.
- 4) No quarantine area has yet been (as of March 20, 2000) established to prevent the movement of citrus fruit and plant material in the South Dade area. (The initial canker find in South Dade was January 5, 2000.)
- 5) No effort has been made to contact owners, growers, custom care providers or other allied trade industries to notify them of sanitary procedures that will be required under quarantine.
- 6) Public relations efforts are underfunded and understaffed and as a result are largely ineffective.

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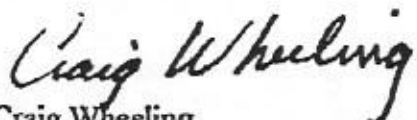
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- 7) Communications between the Program and growers is very poor and is resulting in a growing resentment toward the program by those growers. Rather than soliciting the help and input of growers, lack of progress with and communication from the program are further alienating the growers on a daily basis.
- 8) Currently the program is being operated as if the commercial and residential situations are exclusive of one another. They must be brought together and both situations dealt with simultaneously. If this is not done we will have a situation in which one will continue to re-infect the other and we will never eradicate the disease.
- 9) Risk assessments are not being performed on a timely basis.
- 10) The residential situation is by far the most difficult to deal with because of the number of affected parties. The program has not shown that it realizes the only way to eradicate citrus canker in Florida is to convince the public that it is worth doing and that only through their help and cooperation can it be done.

Mr. Hunt further states that the success of the eradication program is in jeopardy and if changes are not made quickly, the program will fail.

On March 17, 2000, Mike Hunt and I met with Richard Gaskalla of FDACS to voice these concerns. Mr. Gaskalla promised improvement in the eradication program.

Sincerely,



Craig Wheeling
Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Bob Crawford
The Honorable Daniel Glickman