



Agriculture Press Release

February 12, 1999

Crawford Appoints Panel to Combat Canker

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Agriculture Commissioner Bob Crawford today announced the appointment of a 14-member task force to explore both strategic options and possible funding sources to combat the citrus canker outbreak in Florida.

The statewide panel, composed of representatives of the citrus industry, government and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences, will be asked to make recommendations to the Florida Legislature and Congress on how best to eradicate current outbreaks and how to prevent future infestations from occurring in Florida.

"We've asked leaders in the industry, government and the academic world to get together and come up with the best solutions they can to combat this problem," Crawford said.

Citrus canker is a bacterial disease that infects citrus trees, resulting in the appearance of lesions on fruit and leaves, and triggering premature fruit drop. It is not harmful to humans or animals. It is not indigenous to Florida - meaning that outbreaks are caused by the introduction of diseased plant material carried by an international traveler or in the cargo of an international shipment.

In 1995, canker was detected on a citrus tree on a residential lot within a mile of Miami International Airport, and that outbreak has spread throughout much of Dade County. Agriculture officials have cut nearly 100,000 trees in Dade and Broward in an ongoing eradication program.

What are believed to be isolated outbreaks have been detected in Manatee and Hendry Counties, and officials are currently working on eradicating diseased trees in those locations.

Crawford said the task force will be asked to come up with recommendations on procedures that can be put into place to rid Florida of canker and on the critical question of how best to fund those plans.

The task force is expected to hold its first meeting later this month.

Members of the panel and their professional affiliations are below.

Florida Citrus Canker Technical Advisory Task Force

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