

# Feds Earmark \$1.5 Million To Fight Citrus Greening

(AP) The U.S. government has committed to spending \$1.5 million on efforts to control the bacteria that causes citrus greening. U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the money will be spent in Florida, California and Texas in hopes of figuring out how to contain the disease. "This is an effort to try to figure out what works best to try to contain this disease," Vilsack said. "Greening has a severe impact on the citrus industry."

Part of the money spent will be used on production of a parasitic wasp that eats the eggs of the Asian citrus psyllid, which causes the devastating disease in citrus trees. The wasp is a natural enemy of the psyllid. In December, Vilsack announced the creation of an "emergency response framework" to battle citrus greening. The money announced Tuesday is part of that effort, which gathers various groups, agencies and experts to coordinate and focus federal research on fighting the disease.

The citrus greening bacteria, which is spread by an insect, causes trees to produce green, disfigured and bitter fruits by altering nutrient flow to the tree, eventually killing it. It threatens Florida's \$9 billion citrus industry. Growers are seeing the bacteria's effects this season. This year's Florida orange crop is approaching the fruit's lowest harvest in decades, and experts say greening is to blame. Vilsack said other so-called "bio-control" efforts will also be investigated, such as heating the tops of trees and increasing phosphorous in the soil.

**Source URL (retrieved on 02/27/2015 - 1:21am):**

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