

Organic Study: One Step Forward in Fight Against Deadly Citrus Disease

The Organic Center

WASHINGTON (PRNewswire-USNewswire) — As concerns rise over the heavy spraying of unhealthy chemicals in many of the most productive citrus regions of the country to fight off a deadly citrus disease, staff members from more than a dozen congressional offices gathered for a briefing on Tuesday to hear from the organic industry on its efforts to find safe approved organic ways to ward off the threat.

Dr. Jessica Shade, Director of Science Programs for The Organic Center explained the importance of the research on the disease known as citrus greening, and told policy makers they can help in the campaign to find safe ways to combat the disease by letting their constituents know that they too can get involved.

"Citrus greening is not just an organic problem, and this research is not just for organic growers," said Shade. "This disease is threatening both organic and conventional citrus growers, but many of the non-organic methods being used to fight it are proving to be not only inadequate, but pose dangerous risks to the environment and human health. The solutions we find for organic can be used by all."

The Organic Center (TOC) has launched a comprehensive multi-year study to find methods to prevent and treat citrus greening disease, or Huanglongbing (HLB) that are compliant with the strict organic standards established and enforced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program. The Organic Center is partnering with industry members, academics and other non-profits in its effort, and is sponsoring a major social media campaign [#SaveOrganicCitrus](#), along with a [crowdfunding drive](#) [1] to raise more funds for this important research.

Citrus greening is the most devastating disease ever faced by the citrus industry, but most research on controlling the disease has concentrated on conventional citrus production and on methods such as heavy chemical spraying that are prohibited to organic growers under federal regulations, and are harmful to the environment.

One of the most dangerous insecticides being used heavily in the conventional citrus industry to control the disease is a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids. Neonics, as they are known, are banned for use on organic farms and groves.

The use of neonicotinoids by conventional agriculture has skyrocketed in recent years, and a study just published by the United States Geological Survey has found that neonicotinoids are polluting streams throughout the Midwest. The use of

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neonicotinoids has been associated with bee deaths and its use on citrus has been found to be having detrimental effects on pollinator populations.

"Consumers love citrus. They are consuming more and more organic citrus, and they value the fact that they are eating fruit that has not been sprayed with dangerous chemicals," said Shade. "We wanted to make sure members of Congress and their staffs were updated, because they need to know how their constituents are being impacted, and what they can do to encourage effective solutions."

Shade added, "Concerned individuals can become involved in helping our research efforts and in finding an answer to this critical problem by going to our crowdfunding site (<http://www.rockethub.com/44990> [2]) and becoming a part of the solution."

The Organic Center's mission is to convene credible, evidence-based science on the health and environmental benefits of organic food and farming, and to communicate the findings to the public. As an independent non-profit research and education organization operating under the administrative auspices of the Organic Trade Association, The Center envisions improved health for the environment and for people through the conversion of agriculture to organic methods.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.rockethub.com/44990>

[2] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/2DRPoQd1Ms76QmbKee3xOrxKVJ6XbVEVpjvohdETpvd7barXPVJ6X8VdVUQsFzzqdS3hOqen6kS3hOraX6nil8v4y2JgcX2uAvlZ2mYKrR0PI9WhZnQ9rOVJ2N2XO3b_nUQsK6zBx4tRXBQSkTKhvpKMeuVqWtAkIrCzBzBgY-F6IK1FjcSCrLOB2rPUV5xcQsCXCM0kqSa_cCSgVv663hOqerCRCW4NmDNcOJZ0kj67Ca69h_BPoVNwQsCMN4zi9md44E8dQD4lq824puXgQg2lo4o_ixEwH0QgiDgQguWXmcW6y2tjh0X8yjCq84fR0Ylq8biD5KxEwgBjZfVIsYrV3s1pegBLEaw