

Mildura, 23 February 2010

## **Citrus representatives see firsthand the devastating effects of Huanglongbing and its vector the Asiatic Citrus Psyllid**

A group of citrus representatives including citrus growers, pathologists, nurseryman horticulturists and Queensland biosecurity surveillance personnel were left shocked, witnessing firsthand the devastating effects of Huanglongbing (HLB) and its vector the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) on the citrus industry in Florida during a recent study tour. The group also visited California to see how attempts are being made to stem the incursion of the psyllid into that state.

Citrus Australia technical advisor Pat Barkley, who led the tour, said "the trip was highly successful and invaluable for the study tour participants to see firsthand what the Australian citrus industry could face if there is an incursion of HLB and ACP. Many of the group also saw for the first time how disfiguring citrus canker can be, especially in grapefruit.

Ceri Pearce, Senior Plant Health Scientist, Biosecurity Queensland said she had not seen HLB or ACP before so it was invaluable to see the damaging effects of the disease and learn about the latest research and surveillance, diagnostic and management strategies being employed to manage them. Dr. Pearce said "It is critical that this insight into how Florida is attempting to manage HLB and psyllids and how California is surveying psyllids, be used to improve our surveillance and response systems. We need to keep these pests out of Australia."

Sue Brighenti, a NSW citrus producer said "the industry needs to be proactive and put measures in place before an incursion takes place". Ms Brighenti said the study group is working on a strategy to increase awareness of the risks to the citrus industry and broader community.

HLB and the ACP pose a huge threat to the Australian citrus industry and as ACP and HLB are endemic to the Indonesian Archipelago and East Timor, and in Papua New Guinea, the Australian citrus industry needs to be vigilant in their surveillance efforts to detect an incursion and be ready to respond.

*For more information, interview opportunities and images, please contact:*

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*Citrus Australia Ltd is the national peak body for citrus growers. Citrus Australia represents the industry in policy and advocacy, market access and development, regional transitional planning and industry development. The citrus industry in Australia is worth \$440 million and represents the interests of over 2000 citrus growers. It is the largest fresh fruit exporter, with annual export earnings of \$180 million.*

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