



MEDIA RELEASE

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Citrus Greening Disease threatens our beloved Aussie Oranges

The Australian citrus industry is taking serious precautions to prevent the spread of Citrus Greening Disease, largely considered the 'swine flu' of the Global Citrus Industry.

Citrus Greening Disease, or *Huanlongbing* (HBL) as it is known in Asia, is a bacterial disease that kills and destroys citrus trees and critically affects the quality of their fruit. It is extremely difficult to control and there is no evidence elsewhere of successful eradication. This coupled with a high spread potential has the worlds citrus industries very worried.

Spread by insects, the disease has no cure and is already rampant in many parts of the USA and is dangerously close to Australian shores with recent outbreaks in Indonesia.

'The mother of all diseases,' as it is referred to by those in the industry, grows in the tissue of citrus plants and turns the tree canopy yellow with blotchy mottled leaves until the tree eventually dies. The only way to stop the disease is to destroy all the infected trees so the economic cost to the Australian citrus industry would be enormous.

"We are very worried as this disease affects all varieties of citrus so it could potentially wipe our entire industry out," said Kevin Cock, Chairman of Citrus Australia. "Our proximity to the islands of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea where Citrus Greening is prevalent makes us very vulnerable," he added.

In the USA, California's \$1.2 billion citrus industry is threatened and in Florida, the entire industry is facing a complete collapse as a result of Citrus Greening Disease. "We need to wake up and start being proactive if we want to save our industry and stop the same thing happening in Australia," said Kevin.

A contingency plan for an outbreak of citrus greening disease was developed in Melbourne in February 2009 by government and industry members. The main premise of this plan is early identification by raising awareness of the seriousness of this disease in the horticulture industry.

It is currently peak season for navel oranges in Australia and it would be devastating to consider a supermarket or greengrocer without oranges. Eating an orange a day reduces the risk of developing many serious illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

In the fight against ageing and sickness, never has it been so important to eat Australian oranges and it is vital the Australian horticulture industry bands together to help prevent citrus greening disease destroying a beloved industry.

www.oranges.com.au

For further information or to arrange an interview with Kevin Cock please contact Caroline Harris @ Beyond the Square Communication, caroline@beyondthesquare.com.au or T:02 9810 8522