

EU and US sign important agreement for citrus fruit

The US Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, and the acting US Trade Representative, Stephen Vaughn, said on Wednesday that the European Union (EU) had changed the requirements to import US citrus. Specifically, the EU has reduced its requirement to inspect US citrus plantations for citrus canker, which facilitates the entry of US citrus into the EU market allowing farmers to save millions of dollars in production costs.

The US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the US Office of Trade Representation have been working with the European Union for more than 10 years to ensure that the measures taken by the EU are based on scientific risk analysis. "The new EU directive requires the countries in which the citrus cankers have been detected to have a disease management program and to ensure that the exported fruits have no symptoms. That means that the EU are satisfied with the disease management program of the APHIS. As a result, orchard inspections are no longer necessary, which saves US producers about \$5.6 million dollars per year," the APHIS said in a press release.

"Everything we do at the USDA is based on solid science, so it's good to see that the EU has checked out our disease management program to protect our citrus products," said Secretary Perdue. "Relying on science levels the playing field for everyone. And when the playing field is level, American agriculture wins."

"The EU maintains a number of unjustified phytosanitary and sanitary (SPS) barriers on US agricultural exports and we have long called on the EU to base its sanitary and phytosanitary measures on science," said Vaughn. "Today's action removes a long and unfair barrier and it will help bring US citrus exports to the EU back to the levels they had a decade ago."

Producers in Florida grow 25,000 acres of grapefruit, 70 percent of which is destined for the EU market. Meanwhile, the industry estimates that citrus exports will increase by 25 percent, or about US \$15 million, during the first year.

The implementation of the new EU directive is expected to benefit Florida's grapefruit export season in mid-November..

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