Mexico: Researcher develops bio-pesticide to combat the HLB

Ninfa Maria Rosas Garcia, a researcher at the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN), has developed a bio-pesticide that will benefit citrus crops, as it combats the insect that causes the Huanglongbing disease, also known as the yellow dragon pest.

According to the institute, this product will decrease the loss of citrus crops, such as lemon, orange, mandarin, and guava, among others, as it combats the citrus psyllid insect (Diaphorina citri) that carries the bacterial Huanglongbing (HLB) disease.

The professor and researcher of the Center for Genomic Biotechnology (CBG) said that the insect infected the trees it fed on with the Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus bacteria, which causes the disease, and eventually causes their death.

The disease spreads quickly from one tree to another and it causes the fruit to fall prematurely, be small, green, and taste bad. "As a result, producers have to burn their trees when they detect the pest to prevent the disease from spreading," she said.

The insecticide was created in the laboratory of Environmental Biotechnology and its active ingredient is a fungus that works against the insect, said the researcher who is a level I member of the National System of Researchers (SNI).

She said that entomopathogenic fungi were a viable biological alternative to control the pest because they were very specific, had a high efficiency, and were not pathogenic to humans.

The scientist said the fungi, which are very cheap to produce, invade the host (insect), and, as they are highly toxic for them, cause them to die.

She also said they have held talks with government officials and private producers in Tamaulipas, who have expressed their interest in this product, which is being patented, to avoid losses in citrus crops.

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