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# California

## USDA announces \$30M to combat citrus greening

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

DAVIS, Calif. — A more than \$4.5 million grant to the university here is part of \$30 million in funding that U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced for research into the disease that causes citrus greening.

Vilsack on Feb. 9 identified 22 projects nationwide that he said would offer near-term and long-term solutions to huanglongbing, a devastating disease that threatens U.S. citrus production.

The funding, which comes from 2014 Farm Bill money set aside for specialty crops, will include \$23 million for university research as well as money for projects that support such near-term tools as thermotherapy, best-management-practices training, early detection and pest control efforts, according to the agency.

The University of California-Davis will receive \$4.58 million, bolstering plant pathology researcher Bryce Falk's work on preventing citrus greening using RNA technology, said Diane Nelson, spokeswoman for the university's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

The idea is to prevent the citrus psyllid from transmitting citrus greening," Nelson said in an email.

The University of California-Riverside will get nearly \$1.7 million for research. The University of Florida, near where citrus greening has done the most damage, will receive about \$13.5 million for four different projects. Kansas State University will be given a little more than \$3.7 million.

Vilsack said the grants, whose recipients were chosen by a multi-agency panel, will "make a real difference for growers" against huanglongbing.

"Funding these projects through cooperative agreements puts us one step closer to putting real tools to fight this disease into the hands of citrus growers," the secretary said in prepared remarks.

Huanglongbing, which is spread by the Asian citrus psyllid, causes discoloration of fruit and leaves and eventually kills the tree. The University of Florida has estimated that the disease



Courtesy of UC Regents

Citrus greening often causes fruit to become lopsided and remain small. The USDA has announced \$30 million for citrus greening research.

has caused more than 6,500 lost jobs, \$1.3 billion in lost revenue to growers and \$3.6 billion in lost economic activity in Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina and Texas, where the disease is present.

Earlier this month, a

61-square-mile portion of northern Santa Clara County became the latest area to be put under quarantine for the psyllid. Psyllid quarantines are now in place in 15 counties in central and southern California.

Only one known case of

### Online

**USDA Farm Bill programs:**  
[www.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.usda.gov/farmbill)

**UC-Davis College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences:**  
<http://www.caes.ucdavis.edu>

**California Citrus Mutual:**  
<http://www.cacitrusmutual.com>

huanglongbing has been discovered in California, occurring in 2012 in a back yard in Hacienda Heights near Los Angeles.

Orange production in China is expected to drop by 10 percent to 6.9 million metric tons as a result of huanglongbing, which has caused the removal of about 15 percent of the trees in the Guangzhou region on the nation's southern shore, the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service reported recently.

The new money for research was welcome news for California Citrus Mutual, a trade association whose 2,200 grower members represent 60 percent of the state's 275,000-acre, \$2 billion citrus industry, according to CCM's website.

## USDA's new disaster declaration includes all California counties

SACRAMENTO — The federal government has renewed disaster declarations for all 58 California counties as well as four counties in southern Oregon because of the lingering drought, which is entering its fourth year.

The designation makes qualified farm operators eligible for low-interest emergency loans from the USDA's Farm Service Agency as well as a variety of other programs to help growers recover from adversity.

"Our hearts go out to those California farmers and ranchers affected by recent natural disasters," U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a statement. "President Obama and I are committed to ensuring that agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation's economy by sustaining the successes of America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities through these difficult times."

All California counties except for Del Norte, Imperial and San Francisco counties were listed as primary natural disaster areas because of drought-related damages and losses. The three that weren't are still eligible for bene-

fits as contiguous counties. In Oregon, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lake counties were designated as disaster areas, as were eight counties in Nevada and two in Arizona.

The latest declaration comes after the USDA designated every California county but San Francisco as disaster areas in 2013 and last year named portions of 11 drought-ridden western and central states as primary natural disaster areas.

The designation made Feb. 4 gives farmers in affected areas eight months to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. In considering applications, the Farm Service Agency will take into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability, a news release explains.

Additional programs to help farmers and ranchers include the Emergency Conservation Program, the Livestock Forage Disaster Program, the Livestock Indemnity Program, the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish program, and the Tree Assistance Program.

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## Fire safety a top priority at logging sites, companies say

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

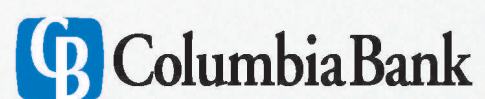
ANDERSON, Calif. — Detailed weather reports, on-the-ground inspections and having the right equipment on hand are just a few ways logging operations manage the risk of fire, company officials said during a workshop here.

Timber companies such as Sierra Pacific Industries have permanent and portable weather stations near every logging operation and know ahead of time whether conditions will be too dry or windy to work, said Cajun James, SPI's research and monitoring manager.

A few years ago, Sierra Pacific developed a 100-point checklist of safety precautions that must be taken at each logging site, going above and beyond what state regulators require, James said.

A key ingredient is the weather station readings, which James compares to the national fire danger weather model. SPI has its own password-protected weather page that logging contractors must check, guiding their activities for the day.

"This is not trivial," James told an audience at the Sierra Cascade Logging Conference on Feb. 6. "This is a very integrated system ... This is something we've done as a company because fire risk — especially with the Moonlight (Fire) and everything — has been huge."



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