



**Florida Farm Bureau Federation
News Release
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Florida Farm Bureau says fresh citrus quarantine rule should be based on conclusive science

(GAINESVILLE, FL) - The U.S. Department of Agriculture should base its final rule regulating shipment of fresh Florida citrus fruit on conclusive scientific data, Florida Farm Bureau said today, responding to a June 6 announcement by USDA that a quarantine will be imposed on the shipment of fresh Florida citrus fruit to other citrus-producing states next season.

The interim rule from USDA prevents fresh Florida fruit from being shipped to 11 states and territories: Alabama, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Louisiana, Northern Mariana Island, Puerto Rico, Texas and the Virgin Islands.

"The ban's impact seems minimal because it only applies to fresh fruit," said Carl B. Loop Jr., president of Florida Farm Bureau, the state's largest general agricultural organization. "Ninety percent of Florida oranges are made into juice. But the proposed rule is troubling because of its broader implications concerning the implementation of other plant and animal disease quarantines."

The quarantine will allow the continued shipment of fresh fruit to non-citrus producing states and other countries under certain restrictions. The rules governing the quarantine are expected to be published by the end of this summer.

"We would hope that the Animal and Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS) would consider only conclusive science before issuing a final rule. This interim rule proposed by APHIS at this time appears to lack conclusive scientific backing." said Loop.

"It is worrisome that the decision by APHIS was undertaken at a time when USDA and the agriculture industry had gone to great lengths to urge that sound science be the guidepost for animal health and food safety standards," Loop added. "The long fight over reopening foreign markets that were closed to U.S. beef as a result of the BSE or "mad cow disease" scare has troubling corollaries to this new situation facing Florida's citrus industry.

"APHIS should carefully evaluate the restrictions on the movement of plant and animal products to ensure that such restrictions are science-based." stated Loop.

Loop commended U.S. Senator Mel Martinez and Florida Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Charles Bronson for their efforts on this issue, and their commitment to finding solutions for Florida's farmers.

While the announcement of this quarantine is difficult to accept, Loop said Florida Farm Bureau appreciates the USDA's and Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns' commitment to Florida's farmers evidenced by Johanns announcing the availability of \$100 million to compensate Florida citrus growers and commercial citrus nursery growers for losses incurred as a result of the citrus canker eradication program.

"While the prospect of the future impact of this rule is troubling and comes at a time when Florida agriculture is already bearing the brunt of multiple financial challenges, the announcement of this new money is very welcome news to Florida's citrus growers." Loop concluded.