

RIVER RAMBLINGS



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SEPT
2020

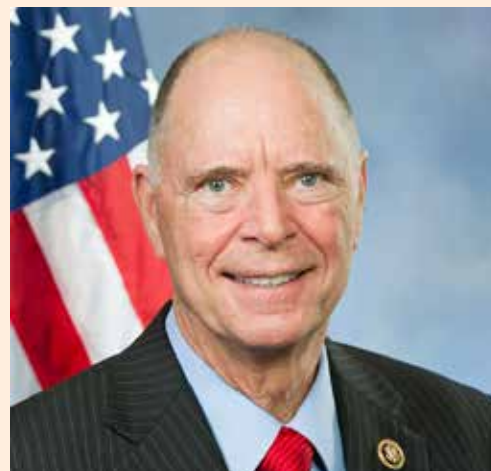
LEAGUE HOSTS CONGRESSIONAL ROUNDTABLE

The Indian River Citrus League hosted a roundtable discussion on August 14 at the Heritage Center in Vero Beach with Congressmen Bill Posey and ranking minority member of the Agricultural Committee Congressman G. T. Thompson.

Discussions centered on key subjects that have negatively impact our industry such as invasive pests that have come through our ports, which was brought up by Dan Richey and the importance of the need for more greening research that was brought up by George Hamner, Jr.

Many League members thanked the congressmen for their support of the CRAFT and MAC programs as well as their support of the Farm Bill. League President Daniel Scott shared with the congressmen that many of the grower trials are showing promise and that there is definitely room for growth in this area.

The roundtable discussion was truly quality time with two important members of congress.



LEAGUE SECURES USDA GRAPEFRUIT JUICE PURCHASE

On August 14, 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced plans to purchase Grapefruit Juice Products for distribution to various food nutrition assistance programs. Purchases will be made under the authority of Section 32 of the Act of August 24, 1935, with the purpose to encourage the continued domestic consumption of these products by diverting them from the normal channels of trade and commerce.

This purchase of \$5 million of grapefruit juice should significantly impact the current grapefruit juice inventories, helping with grower returns for the 2020-2021 season.

The League plans to work with the department for future purchases to assist our grower membership.



of



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- **October 20th-22nd**, daily from 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm
<https://psa102020.eventbrite.com>
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All PSA Remote Trainings require advanced registration. Cost is \$25, which includes training materials and certificate of attendance issued by AFDO**. Seats are limited. Video and audio capabilities are required.

For questions, contact Taylor Langford at taylorlangford@ufl.edu or Sarah McCoy at sarahmccov@ufl.edu.

Training materials and certificate are funded through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FAIN #U18FD005909).**

IMPROVED HORTICULTURAL PRACTICES FOR GRAPEFRUIT PRODUCTION IN THE INDIAN RIVER DISTRICT

Dinesh Phuyal¹ and Rhuanito S. Ferrarezi²

¹PhD Student, Texas A&M University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College Station, TX.

E-mail: phuyaldinesh@tamu.edu

²Assistant Professor, UF/IFAS, Indian River Research and Education Center, Fort Pierce, FL.

E-mail: rferrarezi@ufl.edu

Citrus greening or Huanglongbing (HLB) is a serious challenge for citrus production in Florida. Because of a favorable environment for the survival of vector Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), the disease occurrence soared in the last decade. At present, almost all the trees in commercial groves are affected by this insidious disease. HLB decreases fruit yield, decline the juice quality, and trees become unproductive and prone to perish depending on disease severity. With no cure identified yet, the grapefruit production in the Indian River Citrus District has been rapidly decreasing after the disease was introduced in Florida.

Several management practices have been deployed to manage HLB. Some approaches include eliminating inoculum, enhanced nutritional programs alone or in conjunction with pesticides, adopting tolerant scions and rootstocks, applying hormones, antibiotics, individual protective covers, and producing citrus under protective screening, and others.

A recent study lead by masters student Dinesh Phuyal and advised by Dr. Rhuanito Ferrarezi in collaboration with Drs. Thiago Nogueira, Arun Jani, Davie Kadyampakeni, and Kelly Morgan relating the effect of nutritional treatments in different planting densities on HLB affected grapefruit trees to evaluate growth and fruit yield parameters was recently published in HortScience (<https://doi.org/10.21273/HORTSCI15111-20>). The article describes a large-scale field trial with grapefruit grown in the Flatwoods soil at the Indian River district – the world's premier grapefruit producing region.

The experiment was conducted for two seasons in four-year-old 'Ray Ruby' grapefruit (*Citrus paradisi*) trees on Kuharske citrange (*Citrus sinensis* × *Poncirus trifoliata*) rootstock planted in September 2013. The experiment was laid out in a split-plot design (Fig. 1 - page 3) in which we tested:

Two controlled release fertilizer (CRF) blends

- 16-3-20 (16N-1.31P-16.6K) with 81% of N and 50% of K as CRF, with iron as chelates and all other micronutrients as sulfates, which was blended based on soil analysis and plant nutrient requirements following the UF/IFAS recommendations from <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/SS/SS47800.pdf> and
- 12-3-9 (12N-1.31P-7.47K) with 100% of N and P and 95% of K as CRF, with iron as chelates and all other micronutrients as sulfur-coated products at higher rate than the UF/IFAS recommendations

Three planting densities (Fig. 2 - page 4)

- single row low-density (SR/LD) (15' × 23', 119 trees per acre)
- single row high-density (SR/HD) (10' × 23 m, 173 trees per acre)
- double-row high-density staggered in diamond setting (DR/HD) [(9' × 5' × 3') × 20', 393 trees per acre]

The fertilizers were applied three times per year using a 4-month release product. The grove maintenance and caretaking activities followed the UF/IFAS recommendation as well.

See GRAPEFRUIT PRODUCTION, page 5

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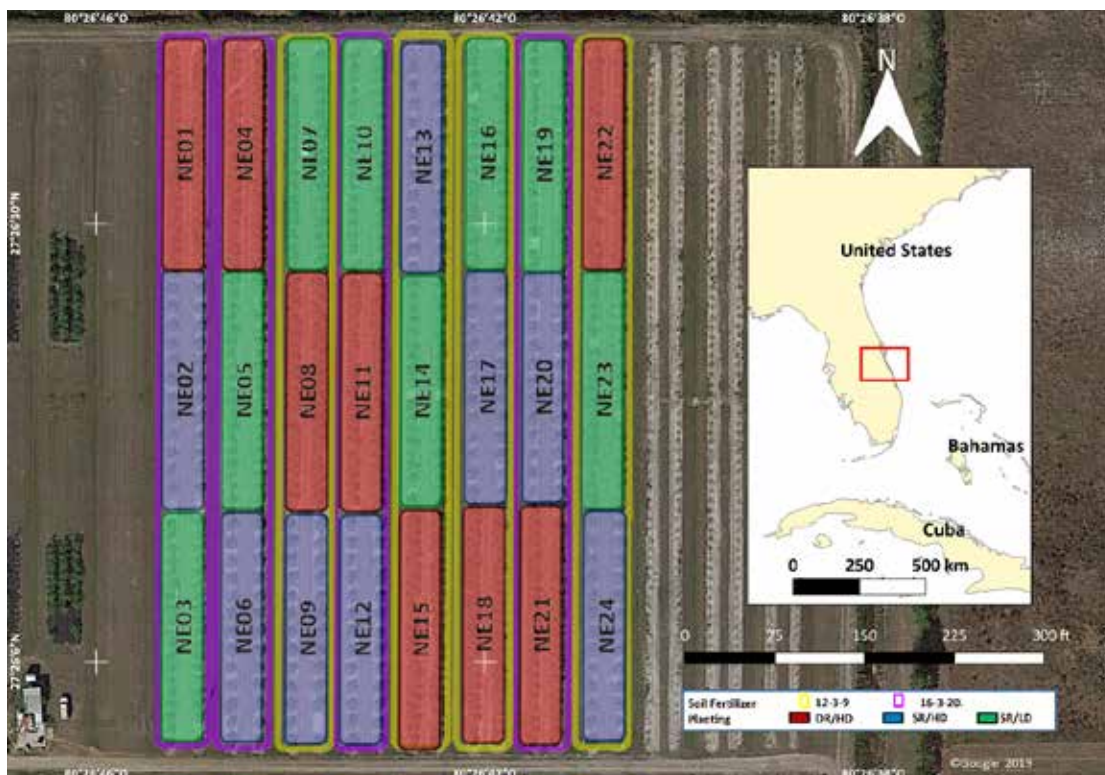


Fig. 1. Overview of the study site at the UF/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Grove, Fort Pierce, FL with 24 large-scale experimental units. We tested two CRF blends [12-3-9 (12N-1.31P-7.47K) and 16-3-20 (16N-1.31P-16.6K)]; and three planting densities [single row low-density (SR/LD), single row high-density (SR/HD), and double row high-density staggered in diamond setting (DR/HD)].

GRAPEFRUIT PRODUCTION, Continued from page 3

Our study revealed grove configuration is a promising approach to manage HLB. Despite smaller trunk diameter and lower canopy growth, high-density planting (393 trees per acre) resulted in higher fruit yield per unit area. The fruit yield per tree was similar in all the planting densities suggesting tree density does not compromise fruit yield per tree under HLB. Additionally, high density resulted in sweeter fruit (with more significant soluble solids content). The study showed the use of sulfur-coated micronutrients in rates higher than IFAS recommendation could increase the canopy growth at the expense of fruit yield without affecting fruit quality. Full results are available online at <https://doi.org/10.21273/HORTSCI15111-20>.

Results indicated that high-density planting could maximize fruit yield; however, long-term assessment is necessary for a commercial recommendation. The authors suggest further studies with different nutrient application methods in other rootstocks. This study was improved, and we included the effect of foliar-applied micronutrients on top of those treatments as a strategy to supplement tree nutrition.

See **GRAPEFRUIT PRODUCTION**, page 6



(A) Front view of raised bed with single row

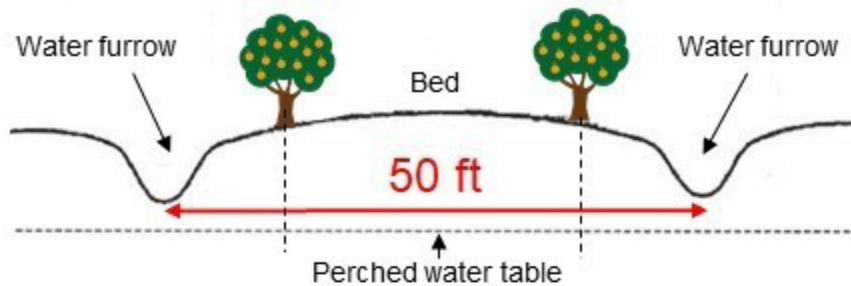
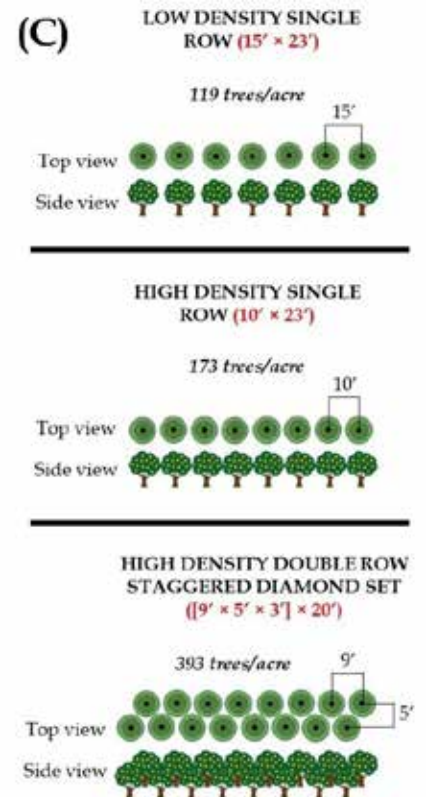
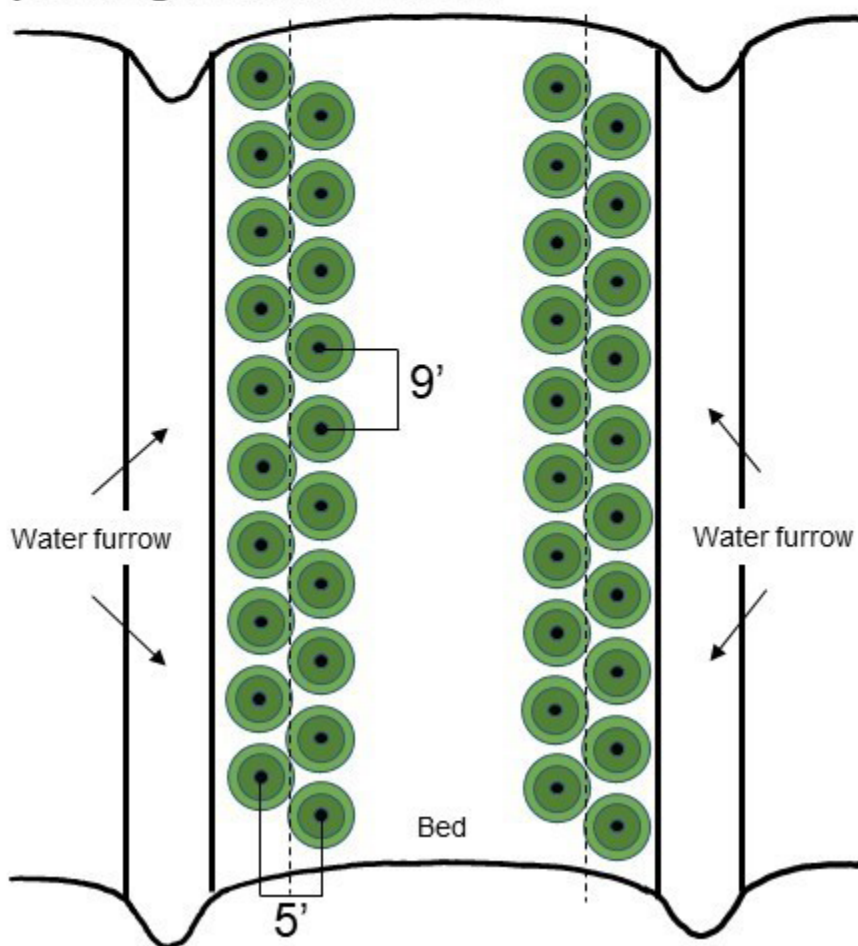


Fig. 2. (A) Front view of the raised bed for citrus growing in Florida Flatwoods soil, (B) Top view of a raised bed for citrus growing in Florida Flatwoods soil in a high density staggered planting, and (C) Arrange, spacing, and a number of trees per acre tested in the trial.

(B) Top view of double row staggered planting in diamond set



Acknowledgements

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NEWS OF NOTE FROM THE CRAFT FOUNDATION...

On July 28, CRAFT staff received word from the USDA's Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC) that CRAFT's application for funding of CRAFT Cycle Two had been approved. Thanks to this funding, along with funds allocated by the Florida Legislature to the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) for large-scale field trials, CRAFT will be able to partner with Florida citrus growers on an additional 3,000 acres of newly planted groves to evaluate the practical application of HLB mitigation strategies. Within the next year, CRAFT anticipates having a total of 5,000 acres of Florida citrus groves participating in the CRAFT program.

Applications for Cycle Two will be available online at craftfdn.org/application until September 4, 2020. A printable application guide is also available to assist growers in the process.



CRAFT Board member, Mark Wheeler recently chose to step off the Board in order to focus on his professional obligations. The CRAFT board of Directors and staff extended a heartfelt 'thank you' to Mr. Wheeler for his service on the Board of Directors over the past year. As in all of his endeavors, he provided sound guidance and support for the staff, Board and Technical Working Group in an effort to ensure the best possible outcomes for Florida's citrus growers.

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried appointed Mr. Steve Smith to fill the vacancy on the Board of Directors. Mr. Smith currently serves as the Executive Vice President of Gulf Citrus Growers Association, and has a long and respected career in the Florida citrus industry. The CRAFT Foundation welcomes Mr. Smith to the CRAFT Board.

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INDUSTRY STRUGGLES WITH NATIONAL OJ PROMOTION ORDER DISCUSSION

The Industry Review Committee, established to provide information about the idea of moving orange juice promotion to a federal promotion order, held an animated 3-hour long meeting on August 14 via Zoom, with over 40 persons in attendance.

On everyone's mind was the "\$64,000 question" of whether increased revenues to promote orange juice via a national program with equal contribution from importers would give Florida growers a better return than the current FDOC program, supported only by Florida orange grower assessments, but which could message positive attributes and the word "Florida." Put another way, if the Florida grower were to invest \$1 in either the Florida FDOC program or a federal program, which dollar invested would be a better investment for that Florida grower?

Dr. Ward, economist and professor emeritus with the University of Florida, attempted to answer the question. He summarized his presentation with four major points. A) Demand is declining. B) Promotion of OJ works. C) "Florida" messaging (not as an origin claim necessarily) is important and carries a "premium" and that translates to increased demand as a result of the Florida messaging for forms of orange juice and origins. D) Free rider inequity is real, but the inequity is not totally solved by simply having everyone pay the same tax if, as a consequence of a national order, at some point, the "Florida" premium/boost wears off with consumers. Dr. Ward cautioned that the word "Florida" essentially behaves like a brand and if it is not mentioned, over time it will lose its positive impact on consumers but agreed that increased promotional activity supported by a national order could by itself increase demand.

Could increases in overall OJ promotion, using positive health and wellness messaging, mitigate or counter-weight the effects of losing the less important Florida "premium" over time? In Dr. Ward's answer, while he agreed that the efficacy of messaging positive attributes of OJ like health and wellness, ranked above messaging "Florida" in driving demand, he could not speculate on the answer everyone wanted to hear. His answer was — "We don't know." Ward explained the reason we cannot know is that there is no way to know if increasing OJ demand by a national order would raise prices (best case), or simply encourage more imports into the U.S. market (worst case). He said that it would likely fall somewhere between the two and there is no way to tell where it would land in order to predict the relative return on investment for either approach.

See OJ, page 10

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OJ, Continued from page 8

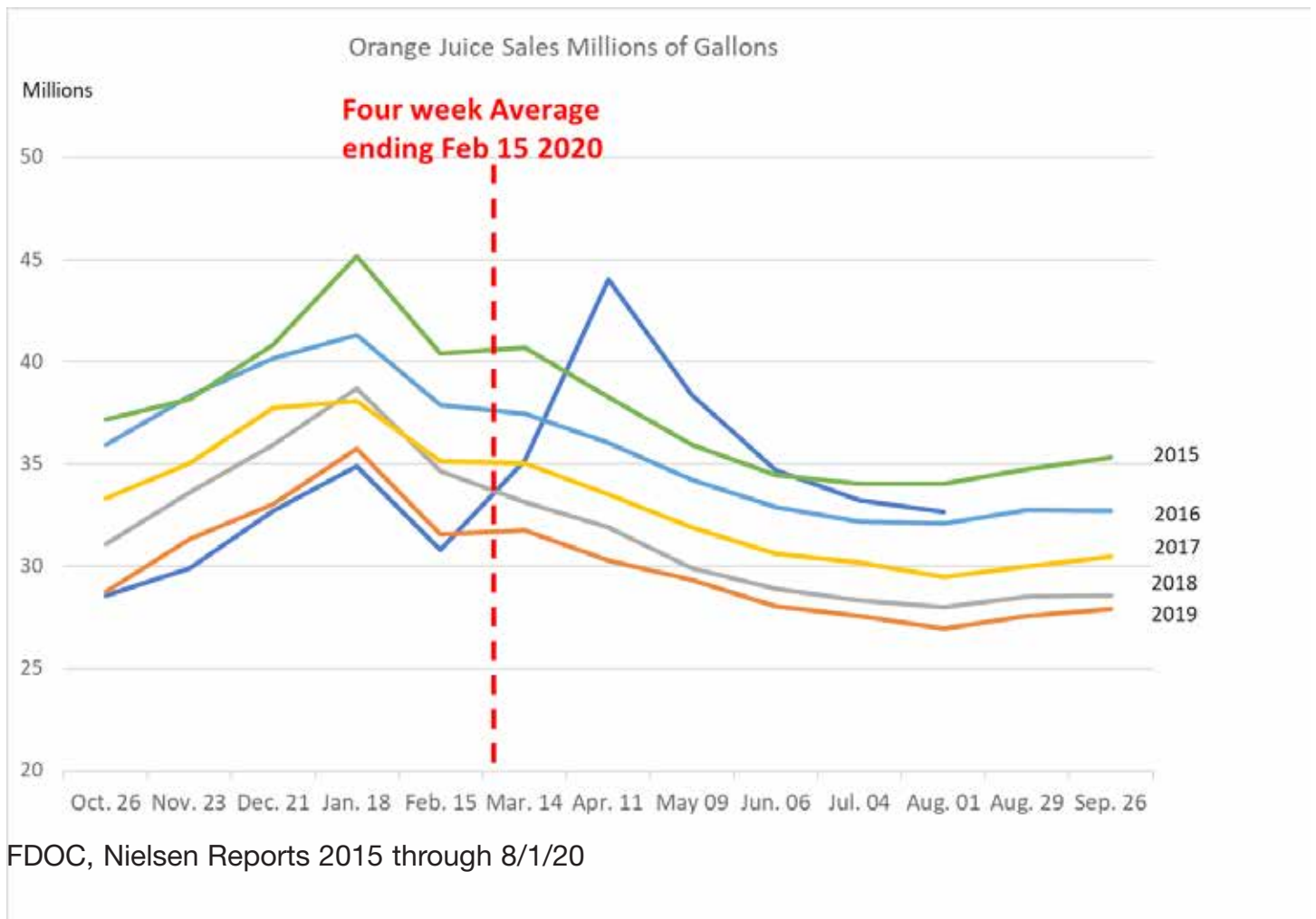
Shannon Shepp offered that while all the FDOC advertising is tagged with “Florida,” their advertising does not talk very much about Florida origin, though arguably that is implied in the marketing message that effectively benefits all orange juice sold in the U.S.

Marty McKenna and others spoke in favor of a Florida program for NFC as a way to do “more good” for the Florida grower. McKenna favored a NFC FDOC program in combination with efforts to improve trade agreements. Although Florida dominates as a NFC supplier, more a quarter of NFC solids sold in the U.S. is imported.

Andy Taylor, speaking as a processor and grower, made the points that Florida is the high cost supplier but the premium that processors were willing to pay Florida growers was due to the proximity of Florida fruit to packaging facilities and market. The savings achieved from associated lower transportation costs drove the premium, not the origin value or quality of the juice.

Many have worried that with Florida’s smaller crops coupled with Covid-19 pressures on the state budget smaller FDOC advertising budgets might also potentially lose continuing FDOC subsidies from the state’s general revenue funds. Dan Richey indicated that when he thanked Governor DeSantis for the appropriation of money to FDOC for marketing, the Governor specifically asked how the federal order initiative was coming along.

In the end, Rick Turner made the point that many at the meeting would agree with that “more questions were raised than answers given.” The Committee is due to schedule another meeting to continue their deliberations and attempt to bring clarity to the choices for growers.



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