

NEWS RELEASE

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Bee Sweet Citrus Leads Fight Against Asian Citrus Psyllid with New Wash Line

FOWLER, Calif., - As California's citrus industry continues to battle the threat of Huanglongbing (HLB), Bee Sweet Citrus has built a brand-new wash line to assist growers in moving citrus in and out of California's coastal counties. With no cure or treatment currently available for the disease, this wash line represents a giant step forward in the industry-wide fight against HLB, and serves as Bee Sweet's most recent project focused on innovation and sustainability.

"Right now, the California Department for Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Committee (CPDPC) have set performance standards that growers must follow before they can move fruit from one quarantined area to another," stated Bee Sweet Citrus Vice President of Farming Keith Watkins. "Of those, growers either have to spray their fruit for the psyllid, or clean their fruit of stems and leaves by running the fruit on a dry brush bed or across a wash line."

HLB, also known as citrus-greening disease, is vectored by the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) and has wreaked havoc to the citrus industry in Florida and Texas. As psyllid populations have increased in Southern California, quarantined zones have been established throughout California to slow the spread of the vector and the disease.

Located in citrus "District Two," Bee Sweet's coastal wash line sits on 15,000 square feet and is the first of its kind in the San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties. With planning and permitting support from the Wallace Group, the advanced equipment can wash fruit, treat it and sort it by size and grade.

"The only way to stop HLB from spreading is to stop the psyllid," continued Watkins. "Even if an area already has a high psyllid population, preventive measures, such as washing fruit to remove the pest from the loads, is imperative to slow the spread of the disease."

The newest addition to the company's "Go Green" initiative, Bee Sweet's Nipomo wash line offsets the need to "spray and move" citrus. Prior to its existence, growers harvesting fruit along California's Central Coast had no choice but to spray their fruit for the psyllid. Though this method is effective in mitigating movement of the pest, other beneficial insects die in the process resulting in flare-ups of other harmful pests.

"The Central Coast is its own quarantine zone, and being that Bee Sweet Citrus is one of the larger growers in that area, we knew that solely relying on spraying wasn't sustainable for the future,"



added Watkins. "When looking at long-term solutions, we knew that building a wash line would provide growers with a way to quickly and efficiently wash the fruit to meet quarantine protocols, with the least amount of damage to the fruit or the land."

Though the Nipomo wash line is owned and operated by Bee Sweet Citrus, the company plans to open it up for outside growers to use as well. There are also plans to utilize the facility as an educational tool for students attending California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. There, students will have the opportunity to see how the equipment is run, as well as why it's a sustainable tool in the fight against HLB.

A monumental achievement in sustainability, Bee Sweet's new wash line officially began operating in May and is already open to outside growers. For more information, please email info@beesweetcitrus.com or call 559-834-5345.

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A grower, packer and shipper of California citrus, Bee Sweet Citrus is a leader in today's agriculture industry. Founded in 1987, Bee Sweet Citrus is a family owned and operated company and provides over 15 different varieties of citrus to its consumers! Located in the heart of California's Central Valley, Bee Sweet Citrus is focused on innovation, sustainability and customer satisfaction.

