Florida citrus gets $2 million for research
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The Florida citrus industry is scheduled to receive $2 million from the state’s ’08-'09 budget to help fund pest and disease research.

Sen. JD Alexander and Reps. Marty Bowen and Stan Mayfield helped obtain the appropriation, which will help fund research on citrus diseases such as Huanglongbing (greening) and canker, according to a Florida Citrus Mutual news release.

Lakeland-based Florida Citrus Mutual worked with the legislators on the measure. The state’s ’08-'09 budget, including the citrus research funding, will become official once it is approved by Gov. Charlie Crist.

“This appropriation is very important to the Florida citrus industry at a time when research may determine our future,” said Mike Sparks, executive vice president/chief executive officer of Florida Citrus Mutual, in the release. “The entire Florida citrus industry would like to thank Sen. Alexander as well as Reps. Bowen and Mayfield for their tireless work on our behalf and recognizing the importance of this funding.

“HLB has the potential to devastate the industry,” Sparks continued. “We as an industry must find a scientific solution. We have more than 100 research projects currently underway and the $2 million is crucial to making sure the projects continue unabated. Florida Citrus Mutual will continue to work hard to uncover all funding sources for research at the state and federal level.”

Huanglongbing has been confirmed in 28 Florida counties and is one of the most serious citrus diseases in the world.

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