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Spain

Citrus

Mediterranean Fruit Fly Control

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Approved by:
Stephen Hammond
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:
Carlos McGrath

Report Highlights: Spanish citrus fruit producers are counting on a new Mediterranean fruit fly control containment protocol (protocol) to prevent the infestation of the Caratitis capitata in citrus fruit produced in Spain. The protocol, as currently being tested, has decreased by about 90 percent fruit-fly populations on the test plots, and, when implemented, will likely enhance Spain's ability to export citrus fruit, free of fruit-fly larvae. (CM8SH4)

Includes PSD Changes: No
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Improved Pest Control System for Citrus Fruit

Spanish citrus fruit producers will likely have a new pest control system, currently being evaluated in the clementine-growing region of Spain, for use with next year's crop. The Autonomous Regional Government of Valencia's ministry of agriculture (MOA) is currently testing the use of sterile male Mediterranean fruit flies, as a means of mitigating future fruit fly infestations. Scientists have reduced fruit fly infestations by as much as 94 percent on two, 250-hectare plots and by as much as 85 percent on a 10,000-hectare parcel where they released the sterile male flies using aerial applications.

Based on their current successes, the MOA is planning to progressively implement this protocol across the entire region by 2007, which should encompass most of the clementine production in Spain. The MOA reports that this approach, along with the use of new types of bate to attract the female flies into traps, will likely allow for the reduction of fruit fly populations to minimum levels, increasing the quality of the citrus fruit, and dramatically decreasing Spanish citrus fruit exporter risk of being locked out of markets where fruit-fly larvae testing protocols are rigorously enforced to protect against the introduction of the Mediterranean fruit fly.

Sector's Reduction in Loss

The MOA estimates that the protocol could lead to a 90 percent reduction in fruit fly infestations, with an associated reduction in the cost of fruit-fly control, in particular, in the cost of pesticides. The MOA estimates that each year the fruit fly is responsible for about a 10,000-ton loss, equal to about six million euros. If the MOA forecast is correct, the new protocol would decrease the annual losses to about 600,000 euros, and substantially decrease the pesticide costs from the current three million Euro level. And, these benefit and cost-saving forecasts do not factor in the potential benefit from a reduced risk of being shut out of markets were the exported Spanish fruit is tested for fruit fly larvae.

The MOA is currently importing the irradiated sterile male pupas, used in this research, from a plant in Mendoza, Argentina, but has plans to ramp up domestic production in the near future. Reportedly, a "bioplant," being built in the Autonomous Region of Valencia, is designed to produce 540 million insects per week, or about 30 billion per year.