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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Citrus Greening Disease

The recent discovery and confirmation of citrus greening in the Rio Grande Valley should be a concern not only to citrus growers but also to Valley agriculture and the public in general. The seriousness of this citrus disease that attacks and kills all forms of citrus trees is one that Valley agriculture leaders have been preparing for several years. This advance planning will be helpful but there are still things we all need to learn and do to address this threat.

At a recent press conference, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples reminded us just how serious we should be taking this by announcing to the public a quarantine area that has been established in the San Juan area within a 5 mile radius from the trees that were positively identified for this disease.

While this disease has not been detected in Cameron County, we are home to approximately 3,960 acres of citrus orchards with an estimated value of \$9,200,000 in 2012, with a projected estimated economic impact of \$32,000,000 according to Extension Agriculture Economist. In addition, there are many backyard citrus trees that homeowners enjoy and add a value to their landscape and quality of life. Through the Cameron County AgriLife Extension Service, our County is providing support to Hidalgo County in managing this issue with particular attention focused on public information and outreach to help people understand how citrus greening can affect trees but more importantly what every backyard citrus owner can do to help protect the citrus industry in the Rio Grande Valley.

While most citrus groves are intensely and carefully managed, many backyard citrus trees often have a less intense management plan leaving them more susceptible to diseases such as citrus greening. The citrus greening disease is spread by a small insect, the Asian Citrus Psyllid that feeds on infected trees and then moves on to healthy trees to feed, thus spreading the disease. It is a very active insect so using the psyllid as a vector, the disease has the ability to spread very quickly.

Our County stands ready to assist Hidalgo County in managing this issue and also in providing service and support to the residents of Cameron County with information and technical support in identifying potential cases of citrus greening. Scientists in the Valley are developing citrus budwood that is resistant to this disease along with other strategies to manage this disease. While this biotechnology

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develops, we will assist both citrus growers and homeowners with citrus in their landscapes in understanding what they can do to prevent the spread of this disease from Hidalgo to Cameron County.

For more specific information on citrus greening and how to manage your citrus trees for the Asian Citrus Psyllid, please contact Cameron County Extension office at 956.383.8236 or visit their office at the Cameron County Annex in San Benito. Jennifer Herrera, Cameron County Extension Agent-Horticulture, Dr. Enrique Perez, CEA-AG and Cameron County Master Gardeners are available to provide support and assistance you.

For further information log to <http://cameron.agrilife.org/citrus-greening/>