4.7 Survey to Estimate the Rate of HLB Infection in Florida Citrus Groves

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The incidence of HLB infection in Florida groves is needed to assess the magnitude of the HLB problem, assist in tracking disease management efforts, and to enable better forecasts of future infection rates, fruit production, and prices. In 2008 and 2009, two independent surveys were conducted to determine infection levels across the state. One survey was a collaborative project between IFAS, The National Agricultural Statistics Service’s Florida field office (NASS), and Division of Plant Industry (DPI). The second survey was conducted by U.S. Sugar Corporation (USSC). The IFAS/NASS/DPI surveys were based on survey forms that were mailed to 3,037 Florida growers, whereas the USSC survey was based on GPS-based tree infection data provided by scouting companies and growers. For 2008, the incidence of HLB was estimated to be 1.6% and 2.3% for the IFAS/NASS/DPI and the USSC surveys, respectively. The infection rates were highest in the Southern and Indian River production regions of the state. Due to a relatively low response rate in 2009, the data from both surveys groups were combined. The combined surveys showed a statewide HLB infection rate for oranges of 6.4%. The Southern, Indian River, and the southern portion of the Central Regions had the highest infection rates, while most of the Central, Western, and Northern regions had infection rates below 1.0%.