



Southern Plant Board

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North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
1060 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1060

May 5, 2008

Ms. Cindy Smith
Administrator
United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
1400 Independence Ave SW., Room 312-E
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Ms. Smith:

On behalf of the entire Southern Plant Board membership, I am writing to recommend that USDA seek funding to fully implement an aggressive survey and tree removal program for the Plum Pox Virus. Since its initial discovery in 1998 in Pennsylvania, Plum Pox Virus has been recognized by regulators and industry as a devastating threat to the stone fruit industry of the United States. Since detection, cooperative efforts implemented by the USDA and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture have successfully minimized the infection areas in Pennsylvania and the project is moving toward full eradication in that state.

In 2006, as result of Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey activities, plum pox was discovered in stone fruit stock in Michigan and New York. Tree removal and survey activities in those states are being actively implemented with the goal of eradication of this disease. However, due to cuts in the 2008 USDA, APHIS, PPQ budget for Miscellaneous Plant Pests, survey and tree removals in all three states are being reduced by as much as 75 percent. This reduction threatens the success of this eradication effort in these states and places the entire stone fruit industry in the United States, including our southern member states at risk.

The Southern Plant Board sincerely appreciates your consideration of this request and looks forward to working cooperatively with you in meeting the challenges posed by this pest.

Sincerely,

Gene B. Cross
President

c: Rebecca Bech, Deputy Administrator, USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Vic Harabin, Eastern Regional Director, USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Phil Garcia, Western Regional Director, USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Bob Ehart, NASDA
Walker Gray Haun, President, National Plant Board
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