



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

STATE OF FLORIDA

Office of the Governor

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April 5, 2016

Chairman G. Ellis Hunt, Jr.
Florida Citrus Commission
605 East Main Street
Post Office Box 9010
Bartow, Florida 33831-9010

Dear Chairman Hunt:

Florida's citrus industry ranks first in the nation for production value of oranges and grapefruit, producing a \$9 billion economic impact annually and accounting for nearly 76,000 jobs in the state.

Since I took office, the state has invested more than \$86 million to support the citrus industry as it faces the challenges of Huanglongbing, also known as citrus greening, and the associated decrease in production. This investment includes \$30 million for important research to find and deploy tools to combat this disease, more than \$48 million for the Citrus Health Response Program, \$3.5 million for construction and repairs to critical budwood facilities and \$4.5 million in additional support for services provided to the industry by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

This will be the first year that the Department of Citrus has received an appropriation of General Revenue to support paid advertising and promotion programs, historically funded by the industry through a self-imposed citrus box tax. In order to ensure proper stewardship of state taxpayer dollars, there are a few actions I request to be taken by the department.

First, the department and the Florida Citrus Commission needs to address the concerns raised by the group of growers, processors and fresh fruit packers in their February 15, 2016 letter to the Commission, which is attached for your convenience. **I ask that the Commission review the department's programmatic and budgetary needs to identify a level of tax relief for the industry, recognizing that it may redefine the department's mission during this challenging time.**

Second, after the appropriate level of box taxes has been set, I request that the revenue from box taxes be used first for marketing and promotion. Once all box tax revenues appropriated for these purposes have been expended, then General Revenue dollars should be utilized.

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Third, to ensure transparency and competitive procurements, I request that all proposed contract agreements that will be utilizing General Revenue be reviewed by my office prior to execution. The department should also identify the metrics that will be used to measure success in the target markets and ensure that the taxpayers receive a positive return on this investment.

Since taking office, we have worked hard to reduce burdensome regulations and cut over 55 taxes so businesses and families can have more opportunities to succeed in Florida. We want to do all we can to ensure growers receive relief from taxes while they are contending with the impacts of citrus greening. We also want to make sure the state can focus its resources on helping find a solution to this disease and supporting the long-term success of the industry in Florida.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
Governor

cc: The Florida Citrus Commission Members
Ms. Shannon Shepp, Executive Director, Florida Department of Citrus
Mr. David Duda, A. Duda & Sons, Inc.
Mr. Clay Wilson, Alico, Inc.
Mr. Ben Griffin, III, Ben Hill Griffin, Inc.
Mr. Greg Nelson, Bernard Egan & Company
Mr. Charles Lucas, Consolidated Citrus, LP
Mr. Ron Edwards, Evans Properties, Inc.
Mr. Joe Marlin Hilliard, Hilliard Brothers, Inc.
Mr. Bill Becker, Peace River Citrus Products, Inc.
Mr. Tom Jenkins, Premier Citrus, L.L.C.
Mr. Dan Richey, Riverfront Packing Company
Mr. Robert H. Buker, Jr., Southern Gardens Citrus
Mr. Ron Mahan, Tamiami Citrus LLC