

Agriculture surveillance program for citrus disease in South Africa

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) has initiated a surveillance program to monitor African citrus greening disease in the vicinity of Gqeberha, Eastern Cape. This program aims to establish the presence or absence of this pest in the area following its recent detection in residential zones of Gqeberha. The disease, caused by bacteria and spread by the African citrus psyllid, leads to symptoms such as blotchy mottling and yellowing of leaf veins, adversely affecting fruit quality.

As part of the surveillance efforts, a delimiting survey will be conducted to map the disease's distribution, which will inform the implementation of phytosanitary measures. DALRRD, in collaboration with Citrus Research International (CRI), will inspect citrus trees for signs of the disease and may collect samples for laboratory analysis. The department has notified nursery owners, citrus growers, and community members in the area, urging their cooperation with the surveillance activities and advising against interference with the department's yellow sticky traps.

Under the Agricultural Pests Act, the movement of citrus propagation material from infested to non-infested areas within the Eastern Cape is restricted to prevent the disease's spread. The department encourages adherence to these regulations to protect non-infested areas.

Additionally, Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen is set to unveil the National Food and Nutrition Security Survey (NFNSS) findings, conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council. This survey provides insights into the country's food and nutrition security, aiming to support households in achieving food security.

Contrary to media reports suggesting a new disease threat to the citrus industry, Justin Chadwick, CEO of the CGA, clarifies that African Citrus Greening has been managed since its detection in 1932. Chadwick emphasizes that the disease is controlled through measures restricting the movement of propagation material, not affecting citrus fruit exports as the disease cannot be spread via fruit or seeds.

Source: SA News (<https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/agriculture-dept-oversees-surveillance-programme-african-citrus-greening-disease>)

Source: IOL (<https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/citrus-industry-not-at-risk-from-citrus-greening-disease-cga-3acea8eb-19fa-460e-b538-c85e10a55042>)

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