BIOFRUITNET
Boosting Innovation in ORGANIC FRUIT production through stronger networks

CIHEAM BARI

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Healthy citrus propagative material to avoid the introduction of transboundary pests/pathogens

Problem

According to EU regulations, certified citrus organic propagative material is mandatory. However, some interesting citrus varieties are not available, and farmers rely on plant material with unknown sanitary status, allowing the introduction of devastating transboundary pests/pathogens, i.e., Huanglongbing (HLB), Citrus Black Spot (CBS) (Pictures 1 and 2).

Applicability box

Theme

Farm management, Standards, Regulations & certification

Keywords

Citrus plant protection; Disease & pest prevention; Standards; Organic certification

Context

Global, Mediterranean basin

Solution

Recognition of exotic pests and disease outbreaks tends to occur when already established, i.e., Orange spiny whitefly (Picture 3). Containment is almost impossible, and preventive measures, such as using 'healthy' citrus plant material and efficient quarantine measures, are the only valid strategy for their control.

Benefits

The use of 'healthy' plant material and efficient quarantine measures is economically and environmentally more efficient than eliminating the newly introduced pests/diseases.

Practical recommendation

The use of 'healthy' plant material and efficient quarantine measures is economically and environmentally more efficient than eliminating the newly introduced pests/diseases.

- The choice of nursery plants is the first action toward sustainable and quality production.
- The use of healthy citrus propagative material is the only valid strategy to prevent the introduction of devastating pests/pathogens such as the recently introduced Orange spiny whitefly in Italy, Croatia and Greece. mealybug *Delottococcus aberiae* in Spain, which are seriously threatening the Mediterranean citriculture.
- If the certified citrus propagative material is unavailable in the specific EU regulatory context of organic plant material production, the farmers can rely on the conventional certified propagative material in the framework of the conversion period.
- The citrus propagative material needs to be imported into the EU countries only if accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate confirming their compliance with the EU legislation.

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Picture 1. Citrus twig dieback and small green lopsided fruits affected by HLB (Photo: J. Bové INRAE, France)

Picture 2. Hard black spot on orange fruit affected by Citrus black spot (Photo: M. Zemzami Domaines Agricoles Morocco)

Picture 3. Sooty mould on harvested oranges affected by Orange spiny whitefly. (Photo: Cioffi et al. 2013, The status of Aleurocanthus spiniferus from its unwanted introduction in Italy to date, Bulletin of Insectology)

Picture 4. Typical EU blue label of the certified citrus plant.

Further information

Video

- Fruit damages of Citrus black spot

Weblinks

- Citrus greening FiBL Research Program
- Introduction of HLB vector, Asian citrus psyllid in the Mediterranean area.
- New Plant Health Regulation: stringent rules for a better protection from plant pests
- Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018
- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more practical recommendations.

About this practice abstract

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