



THE FLORIDA SENATE
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President

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Make Citrus Great Again Set for Final Passage

SB 2500, Florida's balanced budget, includes \$124.5 million for Florida's citrus industry

Tallahassee—The Florida Senate will take up Senate Bill (SB 2500), the General Appropriations Act, a balanced budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, later tonight at the conclusion of the 72-hour constitutionally-required cooling off period. The budget includes \$124.5 million in key funding for Florida's heritage citrus industry, a priority of Senate President Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula).

"Mark my words, Florida citrus is not going down on my watch. We're on the edge of something special. Florida citrus is making a comeback, one tree at a time," said President Albritton. "This heritage industry is not only vital to our state's economy, but it is truly a part of our DNA. Citrus has been a pillar of our state since the 1500s, serving as a key economic driver within our vital agricultural industry. In fact, Florida Citrus provides over \$6.9 billion in economic impact and employs tens of thousands of Floridians across the state. Citrus matters. Research and new technologies offer renewed hope for the future of citrus. Florida will lead the way in pursuing these opportunities."

"Previous investments in research have already yielded significant results," said President Pro Tempore Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment and General Government, who authored the initiative in his committee. "Growers today have a better understanding of how to fight greening than five years ago, bringing hope to the entire industry. Groundbreaking research has led to treatments that mitigate the symptoms of greening, new studies have produced disease-tolerant and disease-resistant varieties, and innovative therapies are helping to prevent fruit drop and increase fruit size. We will leave no stone unturned. With the information gathered from the field trials made possible by this funding, we will know how to deliver better outcomes for growers and save Florida's signature crop."

Large Scale Field Trials

The budget includes \$100 million to request a proposal for large scale field trials that demonstrate the impact of utilizing a combination of grove management, therapeutic tools, and disease resistant varieties for new plantings and the rehabilitation of existing trees, including, but not limited to, grove design, planting preparation, pest management, disease management, pest

and disease exclusion structures, and post planting production practices that promote increased production of citrus.

Acquisition of Trees

A minimum of \$70 million of the \$100 million will be made available for costs directly associated with the acquisition of trees. Initially, 60 percent of the funds will be made available to growers who have citrus groves of at least five acres but less than 2,500 acres. After the initial solicitation period, remaining funds will be available to all growers.

Statewide Public Meetings and Reporting on Citrus Research

The Citrus Research and Development Foundation must hold quarterly meetings at locations that best represent all geographic regions of the state with an emphasis on citrus production. The public meetings must include reporting on the results of non-confidential completed research projects, current research and planned research projects on citrus disease, including but not limited to citrus canker and citrus greening. Scientists, growers, industry representatives, and Citrus Research and Development Foundation administrators must be represented at the public meetings. Public meetings must provide the opportunity for public input, questions and comments.

Cost Share for Rehabbing and Purchasing Citrus Packing Equipment

Additionally, the budget includes \$10 million for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to provide 80 percent cost-share funding to citrus packinghouses for equipment refurbishment, adoption of new technology, or purchasing new equipment. To be eligible, a packinghouse must be in operation, located in Florida, and provide a cost share of 20 percent of the cost to purchase or repair the equipment.

SB 2500 is a fiscally responsible, balanced budget that reduces state spending, lowers per capita spending, and reduces the growth of state bureaucracy. The budget authorizes early payoff of state debt, accounts for significant, broad-based tax relief, and maintains historic state reserves for emergencies. New reporting requirements throughout the budget safeguard taxpayer dollars, improving accountability, transparency, and oversight of government spending.

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov.

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