



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
CHARLES H. BRONSON, Commissioner  
The Capitol • Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800

Please Respond to:

April 28, 2004

Dear Industry Leader:

This letter is being written to update you on the situation with Sudden Oak Death (SOD). The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) responded swiftly and decisively to the threat posed through the shipment of SOD-infested nursery stock from California into Florida. Since March 12, 2004, we have been in communication with our counterparts at the USDA, APHIS and California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to determine what steps are necessary to contain SOD in California and protect Florida from its introduction. A top priority in addressing SOD is to exclude the causal agent *Phytophthora ramorum* on incoming nursery stock and, as a result, avoid quarantines or other regulatory requirements within our agricultural industry. With this in mind, the following steps have been taken:

The nurseries / garden centers that received at-risk plants from California have all been inspected and tested for the presence of *Phytophthora ramorum*, the organism that causes SOD disease. The five nurseries that had plants from California that tested positive have all taken action in concert with FDACS regulatory officials to eliminate all plants that were infested or at-risk for exposure to SOD. In addition, we are working cooperatively with the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service to trace as many of the plants sold via these outlets as well as mail order plants that might be in the Florida landscape. Florida was the first state to effectively address the SOD threat with other states following our lead.

Another important point that I want to communicate to you is the issue of future interstate shipments of nursery stock from California. No one wishes to unnecessarily restrict the movement of nursery stock from California to Florida. However, knowing the long-term adverse impact that SOD could have on the Florida nursery industry through increased production costs and market restrictions, it is important to develop phytosanitary entry requirements that will protect our industry as well as our hardwood forest natural resources.

We as a State and collectively through the National Plant Board (NPB) have set forth fair and reasonable phytosanitary certification proposals. To date, the CDFA has not been willing to accept these proposed standards. Key points or issues of concern



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that dictate a comprehensive certification protocol for all nursery stock shipments from California to Florida include the ever-changing SOD host list that has grown from just a few plants in 1995 to over 60 in 2004. It is clear that the host list for SOD is not clearly understood or complete at this point in time. The fact that SOD-infested *camellia* plants, a relatively newly identified SOD host, were shipped into Florida is indication of our concern over the need for a comprehensive inspection program. Further, Florida has been identified as a state that has the right climatic conditions as well as plant diversity that puts us at extremely high risk.

We have been and remain receptive to working cooperatively with the USDA and CDFA to develop biologically sound phytosanitary standards designed to allow the interstate movement of nursery stock from California and Florida. It is noteworthy that representation from the FDACS participated in a two-day NPB meeting April 20-21, 2004 to develop a comprehensive SOD certification protocol. This protocol was delivered to the USDA on April 22, 2004 for consideration and adoption. The USDA elected not to adopt the NPB certification standards, indicating they lacked the legal authority to regulate all nursery stock from California. Florida does have this authority and has petitioned the USDA for a special needs exception to protect our agricultural and natural resources from SOD introductions.

The FDACS remains ready and willing to work cooperatively with our state and federal counterparts to develop a certification protocol that is practical yet will provide reasonable safeguards to Florida. However, California must be willing to work cooperatively with us to resolve this issue. Should you have any questions please contact my office or the FDACS, DPI, Richard Gaskalla, Director, via telephone number (352) 372-3505, Extension 106 or e-mail address [gaskalr@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:gaskalr@doacs.state.fl.us). Please know I will keep you updated as things continue to develop.

Sincerely,



CHARLES H. BRONSON  
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

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