



# PASSAGE *to* SUCCESS

FARM BUREAU - CONFRONTING THE ISSUES

## **Abandonment of Orchards AFBF Policy Development May 2009**

**Issue:** Abandoned orchards and fruit groves can harbor dangerous pests and diseases for fruit trees. Given the current economic climate, the chances of orchard abandonment will increase, placing producers within close proximity of an abandoned orchard at higher risk.

**Background:** Neglected or abandoned orchards have been defined as any orchard where standard management practices, as described in state and regional publications, are not being met and one or more pest, pathogen, disease, or condition of economic consequence to a particular crop grown nearby exists.

Consisting of a wide array of crops and products, the U.S. fruit and tree nuts industry is an important component of the nation's agricultural sector. Fruit and tree nut production is harvested from less than 2 percent of total harvested cropland but generates, on average, about 13% of U.S. farm cash receipts for all agricultural crops.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) last conducted their Fruit Inventory Survey in 2004. That survey indicated that slightly less than 25 percent of fruit producers reported an abandoned orchard within one-half mile of their fruit. More than 80 percent of those abandoned orchards were apple orchards. Further, 43 percent of the abandoned orchards were less than 10 acres and 70 percent were less than 20 acres.

In response to the problem abandoned orchards pose, some counties have tried to combat the challenge by tearing out trees and spraying the abandoned orchards. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) recommends destroying the abandoned orchards through bulldozing or burning in order to reduce the use of pesticides to control transmitted insects and diseases from abandoned host trees. However, availability of federal and local funds that have historically supported these programs has been reduced in many counties.

### **Questions:**

What are possible solutions to this problem?

What kind of a financial-based incentive would work for fruit producers? What other incentives and/or disincentives could be implemented?

Can this issue be addressed without infringing on private property rights?

### **Farm Bureau Policy:**

### **Policy 317 – Wildlife Pest and Predator Control**

Lines 1-5, 10-11, 25-26:

Controlling wildlife damage is a critical factor in maintaining the success of American agriculture. Toward that goal, we support:

(1) Developing practical recommendations on methods for controlling all wildlife pests by providing adequate funding to USDA for intensive research; . . .

(10) The continuance of predator and rodent control in rural and urban areas which benefit public and health safety; . . .

(11) Control programs to reduce to reduce wildlife populations to manageable levels in areas where they are numerous and destructive; . . .

### **Policy 378 – Plant and Animal Infections and Infestations**

Bacteria, Diseases and Virus sub section, Lines 125-135:

We support:

(1) The development and implementation of a formal plan such as Florida's Citrus Health Response Plan that helps growers manage and control the spread of citrus pests and diseases (e.g., citrus canker, citrus greening);

(2) Increased citrus greening exclusion efforts and research funding for vector and disease detection efforts and eradication, inoculation and best orchard management for the protection of the U.S. citrus industry; . . .