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Food Banks Restricting Citrus Donations as a result of ACP Citrus Quarantine

Phoenix/Mesa, ARIZONA: Arizona is known for growing an abundance of citrus and food banks have been grateful recipients of significant donations throughout the years. This year, however, the current Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) quarantine will cause St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance and United Food Bank to restrict the citrus donations they accept.

ACP is a tiny pest that can spread the citrus greening disease. This disease has the potential to kill orange, grapefruit, lemon and all types of citrus trees around the state. Due to the risk this bug carries, the Arizona Department of Agriculture has quarantined the areas where ACP has been verified. The quarantine currently includes Mohave County and portions of La Paz, Maricopa, Pima, Santa Cruz, Yavapai and Yuma Counties. ACP has been found everywhere from people's backyards to public roads and commercial groves. Citrus is an essential part of Arizona's \$17.1 billion agriculture impact on our economy and its protection is critical.

"Arizona's citrus is at risk and we all must take precautions to ensure that we contain the psyllid," said Ginny Hildebrand, President & CEO of United Food Bank. "Since our food banks distribute to multiple counties throughout the state, it is important that we do not facilitate the spread of the ACP, which could eventually lead to the presence of citrus greening disease in Arizona. The only way to ensure we comply is to not accept donations from the public."

St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance and United Food Bank received over 3.5 million pounds of donated citrus from commercial and residential growers last year. To accommodate the quarantine, this year both food banks will not be accepting any drop off citrus donations. They will be only accepting donations through approved commercial growers and the controlled gleaning programs of each food bank. Residents should educate themselves about the quarantine restrictions so they can determine how to best handle their excess citrus.

"Since 2009 we've battled this pest, preventing it from covering the whole state. So far we've been successful keeping the citrus greening bacteria from our state," said Mark Killian, Director of the Department of Agriculture. "We appreciate the food banks partnership in ensuring the quarantine is followed as we continue to protect our citrus trees."

More information regarding the ACP citrus quarantine and how to save Arizona's citrus can be found at agriculture.az.gov and azfoodbanks.org.

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