



By Carl Collen

Thursday 26th September 2019, 9:00 GMT

Florida set for major grapefruit planting

The first significant planting of grapefruit since citrus greening took hold in the state has been announced



In Florida, Peace River Citrus Products and Scott Family Companies and its partners have announced that they will invest more than US\$25m to plant a quarter million new grapefruit trees on 1,500 acres in Florida's St. Lucie and Indian River Counties.

The move is the first major grapefruit planting in the state since citrus greening decimated Florida's existing grapefruit groves.

"Through this innovative grove planting commitment, Peace River and The Scott Family Companies aim to boost Florida's grapefruit crop by 15 per cent once the new groves reach maturity," said Andy Taylor, senior vice-president and chief financial officer at Peace River Citrus Products.

"Tackling the invasive citrus greening disease requires the citrus industry to work together," added Dan Richey, president and CEO of Riverfront Packing Company. "Scott Family Companies is proud to partner with

Peace River to not only plant 1,500 acres of grapefruit trees in Florida but to also ensure these trees are protected from devastating diseases."

In addition to the spread of citrus greening, a series of hurricanes has in recent years decimated the Florida citrus crop.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis joined Peace River, Scott Family Companies and its partners in 'raising a glass of grapefruit juice' to celebrate the rebuilding of Florida grapefruit groves.

"Florida is proud to have the best citrus produce in the world," said he outlined. "Since January, we've been dedicating resources and improving policies to make sure Florida's citrus industry gets back on its feet, and today, we've surpassed the 50 per cent milestone for this important funding.

"For citrus growers still suffering from Hurricane Irma, know this – we are providing recovery funding as quickly as possible, and we will not waiver in our support."

Through its long-standing partnership with Peace River, The Coca-Cola Company is supporting this effort with a multi-year agreement to purchase processed grapefruit juice for its global juice brands.

"As a total beverage company and proud manufacturer of juice products in the state of Florida, Coca-Cola has been and remains committed to using Florida citrus in our growing portfolio of products," said Mark Westfall, chief procurement officer for The Coca-Cola Company. "We have a longstanding commitment to the Florida citrus industry with ongoing partnerships to address citrus greening and a US\$2bn commitment announced in 2013 to support the planting of 25,000 new acres of orange groves in Florida. We're pleased to build on this with today's announcement that we will secure an increased supply of Florida grapefruit juice for our products like Simply Grapefruit, which is bottled in Auburndale."

In addition, Japan-based flavour and

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fragrance giant Takasago International Corporation is also strengthening its 40-year relationship with the Florida citrus industry by investing

US\$1.5 million in the new tree plantings, underwriting the cost of every new tree planted through this partnership to ensure a sustainable grapefruit industry in Florida.

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