

Magna-Bon II, LLC

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Magna-Bon Products fight canker, preserve environment

Ever browse your local produce section and pick up a grapefruit dotted with spots? It's still edible, but chances are you won't buy it—not when there's a handful of blemish-free fruits still in the bin. Those spots, and the citrus canker that caused them, have been costing the citrus industry millions of dollars in lost trees, crops and pesticides.

Frustrated Florida growers often turn to Magna-Bon II, LLC, an agricultural company based in Okeechobee. Magna-Bon's array of products are proven to suppress canker and other crop-killing bacteria from invading fruits and vegetables.

The company started in 1992, under the name Magna-Bon. Its best-known product is Magna-Bon CS 2005, a bactericide and fungicide designed to fight canker using a minimum amount of metallic copper.

The company is currently conducting two, two-year field trials with the University of Florida on the effectiveness of CS 2005 on grapefruits and Hamlin oranges, two fruits susceptible to citrus canker. The two-year grapefruit trial is finished, and the Hamlin orange trial is in its second year.

Dr. Jim Graham, professor of soil microbiology at University of Florida's Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred, found CS 2005 is just as effective at controlling the infection process on the surface of the fruit as traditional, film-forming products. And, because CS 2005 is made from water-soluble, chelated copper, a little goes a long way. Just one gallon of product needs to be mixed with 500 gallons of water to achieve the desired results.

“The clear advantage is that there is less copper buildup in the environment,” Graham said.

Studies have also found another Magna-Bon product derived from chelated copper, Post Harvest Wash Preserve, increases the shelf life of produce because it kills the bacteria that causes food to rot. And it’s been effective in battling Bacterial leaf spot, the enemy of tomatoes and peppers.

But “the real big thing that’s coming out,” said owner Frank Miele, is a report from the University of Oklahoma, which found evidence that Magna-Bon’s Post Harvest Wash Preserve kills E. coli and salmonella. If approved by the EPA, Magna-Bon will expand its clientele to include the meat, poultry and seafood industries.

“We just started testing it this year for this purpose,” Miele said. “So far it’s basically doing whatever it said it was going to do.”



Credit: USDA

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Magna-Bon’s popular chelated copper product, Roof-A-Cide, is also used in 18 states to prevent mold growth on roofs and has been used by the USDA’s Fort Pierce research plant for the past four years.

Miele bought Magna-Bon in 2004 and the company has doubled in size every year since. He said the facility’s Okeechobee location makes it easier to deliver products to growers on both coasts.

Miele would like to double the size of its facility and is negotiating the purchase of additional property so he can add more storage and manufacturing space.

“The municipalities have been fantastic to work with,” he said. “They’re really invested in helping us grow our company.”

Miele is excited to be part of Okeechobee’s economic growth. He has regular meetings with the Economic Council of Okeechobee, and the Business Development Board of Okeechobee opened a door for him to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He plans to travel with that group to Jamaica to explore exporting his products to the Caribbean.