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## **Florida Citrus Mutual stands behind CAFTA**

From Herald Staff and Wire Services

### **AGRICULTURE**

Florida's largest citrus grower organization announced its endorsement of the Central American Free Trade Agreement Wednesday while thanking the Bush administration for supporting the industry's efforts to obtain hurricane relief and canker eradication.

"We continue to be encouraged by the Bush administration's supportive actions for Florida citrus growers as we provide this resolution for CAFTA-DR," said a Florida Citrus Mutual statement.

The trade pact, which still must be approved by the U.S. Congress, includes Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as the Caribbean country of the Dominican Republic.

"Bush administration officials reached out to Mutual seeking our support for CAFTA-DR," said Marty McKenna, a Polk County grower who is president of the organization.

McKenna said that the citrus industry's support for CAFTA-DR "will also strengthen our alliance with citrus-producing nations in Central America which share our interest in maintaining a fair playing field."

In contrast, Florida's sugar industry has fought approval of CAFTA because the trade pact increased sugar quotas for the six countries. But one of Florida's largest sugar producers, U.S. Sugar Corp. is also the owner of Southern Gardens, the state's largest citrus processing facility.