

Texas A&M University-Kingsville Citrus Center

The Texas A&M University-Kingsville Citrus Center, which opened in 1948 to support the citrus industry, is located northeast of Weslaco in the subtropical Lower Rio Grande Valley, where the commercial citrus industry of Texas is located. The Citrus Center's 60-acre main campus is situated on FM 1015 (International Blvd.), on the north side of I-2 (Expressway 83). There is also a 250-acre research farm 2 miles south of the Center, and a 50-acre farm is leased from Rio Farms in Monte Alto where the soils are more typical of the Valley. The orchards are used for research in all aspects of citriculture, while in the research laboratories cutting-edge technologies are used to benefit the citrus growers of Texas. While the Center is best known for the creation of the dark red grapefruits, it has also been the source of many other products and programs which have helped the growers, including new integrated pest and disease control strategies (both chemical and biological), improved disease detection methods, water saving methodologies, and new breeding techniques. The Center manages the state's certified budwood program, and provides citrus nurseries pathogen-free budwood. It also houses a USDA-certified diagnostic laboratory dedicated to detect exotic diseases which could threaten the industry.

The research results are disseminated through publications, presentations to growers and other scientists, news media and grower consultations. The scientists cooperate with other researchers in Texas, as well as other states and countries, and the Center has hosted visiting scientists and students from around the world.

Faculty also teach classes and guide graduate students' research projects, all of which are designed to help growers. Over 90 students, who increasingly come from families in the Valley, have graduated with masters and doctorate degrees, and have established successful careers.