

*Citrus Industry Magazine- UF/IFAS SWFREC Citrus Mechanical Harvesting Program "What's Shakin" column*

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With an increased interest in citrus mechanical harvesting, citrus processors are becoming concerned about issues that could have a direct impact on their operations. To aid in their search for answers The IFAS Citrus Mechanical Harvesting website has added a topic grouping entitled "Processor Issues". Food Safety related to fruit picked off the ground and Trailer Debris are two issues of concern to processors, and possibly could prove to be impediments to the adoption of mechanical harvesting.

Food safety addresses the effects of mechanical harvesting on fruit microflora. Dr. Michelle Danyluk is investigating whether mechanically harvesting with a ground fruit machine increases bacteria on the peel and in the juice. She is further looking at the increased amount of sand present in mechanically harvested fruit picked up off the ground.

A trailer debris study headed by Dr. Tim Spann addresses the amount of trash (stems, branches, twigs and leaves) being deposited into a trailer of mechanically harvested fruit. At the very least, unwanted debris increases waste handling costs. At the worst, debris could damage processing machinery.