

# Citrus Researchers from Around the World Converge to Share Results

*By Harold Browning*



Research efforts to find solutions to huanglongbing (HLB) and other challenges to citrus production are alive and well, as evidenced by the International Citrus Congress (ICC) held in Brazil last month. Some 1,070 delegates attended the five-day meeting in Foz Do Iguaçu. This meeting, held every four years in citrus regions around the world, is a showcase for experts and rising stars alike, who attend to re-establish communication with their colleagues and to present their latest results. While not reserved for scientists alone, they make up the majority of participants at this meeting. Brazil, the host country, turned out in large numbers, including scientists, growers, nurserymen and allied business representatives who support the citrus industry.

The program — a composite of keynote speakers, short oral presentations, and 350 posters depicting a wide range of topics — was bracketed with pre- and post-congress tours to citrus-production areas in the region. Delegates were encouraged to mingle and share ideas and results at formal sessions, informal poster sessions and during meals at the very nice Mabu Convention Center.

HLB was clearly a major topic of the discussions and presentations, but a wide range of topics were presented by delegates from close to 50 countries, according to the organizers. Citrus plant genetics and plant improvement were recurrent themes. Local experts and their international colleagues updated attendees on citrus leprosis, citrus variegated chlorosis, citrus black spot and other diseases. Integrated pest management topics included fruit flies, mites and many of the insect pests familiar to Florida citrus growers. Horticultural practices were often presented in the program.

Brazil clearly had the largest participation, as is often the case at these meetings, but many U.S. scientists and fewer industry representatives traveled to the meeting. Florida was represented by 10 University of Florida (UF) scientists, three citrus Extension agents, five Agricultural Research Service scientists, three Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) representatives, nurserymen, a packer and two growers, both who serve on CRDF committees. California and Texas were represented by scientists, growers and allied industry members — all there to absorb information and new findings in the fight to keep citrus profitable across the globe.

The research community from Florida brought home new information to incorporate into its programs and, hopefully, new connections with cooperators it will work with. Notable presentations on topics of interest to the Florida industry were many, but a few warrant mention. Fred Gmitter, UF professor of horticulture, presented an outstanding keynote address on the global community effort to sequence the citrus genome. He walked the audience through the rapid changes that advances in technology mean to this effort. Bryce Falk's (University of California, Davis) keynote address covered the background and potential of RNA interference. Finally, a keynote by Leandro Peña, currently working in Brazil, summarized efforts to develop psyllid-repellent host plants through engineering.

The book of abstracts from the meeting can be accessed by going to the ICC website ([www.icc2016.com/abstract/book-of-abstracts](http://www.icc2016.com/abstract/book-of-abstracts)).

*Harold Browning is Chief Operations Officer of CRDF. The foundation is charged with funding citrus research and getting the results of that research to use in the grove.*



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