



# CITRUS RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION GROWER RESEARCH REPORT

Volume 4 Issue 9

June 2015

## Important Activities at CRDF in June 2015

June marks the end of the fiscal year for CRDF, when projects are ending and new activities and goals are being planned and discussed at Committee and Board. This month, your representatives to CRDF are meeting as committees to look closely at the gaps that exist in our efforts to deliver solutions to HLB, and to recommend forward the proper plans and budgets for the next cycle. The annual budgeting process also is underway and we are optimistic that the Florida Legislature is again going to partner with Florida citrus growers in funding the necessary work. All of this effort is focused on development and delivery of solutions to HLB and the emphasis is on NOW!

We are often asked how CRDF determines change of course: when a line of inquiry is no longer useful and also when new ideas are put to the test. The simple answer is that, like the Citrus Production Research Advisory Council (Box Tax Council) before it, CRDF funds projects with annual reviews and evaluation. Contracting of institutions like University of Florida or the US Department of Agriculture may allow for up to 3 years on an approved project, but continued funding is based on adequate progress and availability of funds. In this manner, continuous evaluation allows CRDF to end projects whose prospects have dimmed, while adding new ideas, investigators, and new methods into the process.

### Ending Current Funded CRDF Projects – How does this happen?

As described above, a natural endpoint of projects occurs at least once every 3 years, or more frequently as needed. At the same time, CRDF considers new projects each year. At close of FY 2014-15 on June 30, more than half of CRDF's projects will end (about 80 of the former 130 projects). This is a significant change in the portfolios of research and product delivery efforts and at the same time, an important opportunity to determine how to move more rapidly and in a focused way towards our goals of managing HLB. This turnover allowed CRDF to review what was ending, and selectively invite new pre-proposals and proposals to address the needs going forward.

From 81 ending projects, 29 research proposals were invited and 19 delivery project proposals were invited for

### Upcoming Board and Committee Meetings

**PLEASE NOTE alternate locations for meetings during renovations at Ben Hill Griffin Hall at UF, IFAS, CREC.**

June 15 - Finance & Audit, telephonic 4:00 pm

June 18 - Box Tax Advisory, Hyatt, Bonita Springs 1:30 pm

June 18 - Board of Directors, Hyatt, Bonita Springs 1:45 pm

areas. With these proposals in hand, CRDF Research Management Committee and the Commercial Product Delivery Committee are reviewing them with help from outside experts and will be making final recommendations to the Board for approval at the June 18 Board Meeting at Bonita Springs.

In this manner, CRDF is refocusing efforts, and reshaping where your funding is directed. Most important are projects which promise to further elaborate how short-term tools can be used to combat the increasing intensity of disease in Florida groves. To determine the effectiveness and adaptability of new tools, field trials are being established across a broad front: to target the pathogen (bactericides and thermal therapy); to target the vector psyllid (CHMA support, resistance monitoring and how insecticides are impacting ACP populations); and to target the plant (nutrition, modifying soil and irrigation qualities to benefit root health and nutrient uptake, tolerant rootstocks). Field trails have been discussed in other communications but remain an important way to evaluate how growers can preserve tree health.

The Florida industry has considerable help from recent commitment of federal funds through the Farm Bill and from Congressional Appropriations to support "shovel-ready" projects to test and deliver solutions. The addition of more than 35 million per year of HLB support allows CRDF to provide a more focused effort with grower funds, and to provide for the coordination of local with national funding programs. The FY 2015-16 CRDF Budget will be discussed for approval next week, and the committees are considering how best to leverage the federal program funds. The next issue of the *Citrus Industry Magazine* will provide an overview of how CRDF and federal funding sources are aligned with industry priorities.

### How Can Progress To Date Be Evaluated and Focused in Continuing Efforts?

The concerted effort in Florida against HLB has been ongoing since 2008, with some areas of research predating the first major HLB grant program. Accumulation of results, information and interpretation allow for analysis of

progress, identification of barriers, and a general pathway for each strategy to follow to reach success. This is easy to describe, but more difficult to accomplish across the complex HLB/citrus system and across the many scientists around the country and world now working on HLB. CRDF has recognized the need for this analysis and also that it would have to be separated into specific topics. Last fall, CRDF and allied partners conducted a two-day exercise to determine what has been learned and what are the next steps for accelerating solutions targeted at reducing CLas bacteria in infected plants. Scientists who were invited to this event shared results, perspectives and hypotheses, and were facilitated in this exercise to identify what barriers exist to working together more closely to find solutions. Specific sessions discussed what can be done to advance the short-term therapies like thermal treatment and chemical bactericides. The 25 participants discussed broad organizational issues as well as detailed technical challenges, and identified several areas where improvement could help move the entire group towards the end point of delivery of tools. The emphasis was on combined, rather than individual efforts. The results of this effort have been shared with committees and the board, and several recommendations have been implemented.

The next phase of this analysis will focus on how best to bring tolerant or resistant plant materials into use in the shortest time. This topic has seen more investment than any other area, and although long-term in nature, has yielded promising results, including the release of UF and USDA rootstocks that appear more tolerant to HLB than standard rootstocks. It is time to bring this group of scientists and interested parties together to assess where we are with conventional and engineered citrus improvement, and to plan for the most important next steps. This analysis is scheduled to occur this fall and should allow new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration to emerge. A desired end point is a clear pathway for field evaluation, data analysis and communication about the most promising rootstocks and scions. Propagation and release of the front-runners is vital as new plantings are being considered across the state. CRDF recognizes that tolerance or resistance to HLB is an important element of grove management today, and will lead to future sustainability of new plantings.

Growers request regular updates on promising solutions, and are really asking “how soon will we have answers?”. While the analyses described above may not provide definitive answers, these exercises will identify where further support by CRDF and other sources is needed. As this information is gathered, it

action. Resources are available to push forward with the most critical programs. As was mentioned in the earlier discussion regarding federal and CRDF funding programs, CRDF can play a significant role in making sure these emerging needs are addressed with both CRDF and federal funding.

### **CRDF Involvement in Grower Education and Outreach Activities**

Communication is vital in this era of HLB impact. CRDF is attempting to use all avenues to reach growers with updates on the programs and progress related to HLB and other priorities, like citrus canker. Monthly magazine columns provide updates, and grower meetings are major opportunities for work funded by CRDF to be reported. These meetings occur across the annual calendar and several are coming up in the next few weeks/months that offer updates on a number of topics:

**Bonita Springs Citrus Grower Annual Meeting, hosted by Florida Citrus Mutual.** The Grower Education Session on Thursday morning, June 18 will provide updates focused on both maintenance of mature trees infected with HLB and several presentations will focus on new plantings and available tools to get young trees into production. As usual, this will be a mix of researcher and grower updates.

**Ag EXPO, hosted by Southeast AgNet.** This two-day event on August 18-19 at the Lee Civic Center in Fort Myers offers a broad program with updates on many topics related to HLB. Interspersed with time slots to visit the Trade Show, the Ag Expo is another important venue for communication of HLB news. The UF, IFAS Extension Team does an outstanding job at their demonstration booth at the Ag EXPO, providing materials, information and tools for diagnosis and treatment of citrus pests and diseases.

**Regional Grower Meetings,** which occur regularly through the year, are yet another mechanism for information dissemination. Whether organized around a regional citrus grower association, or planned by the IFAS Extension Team, these meetings provide the forum for results presentation and discussion, and with a mix of field days and seminars, provide current information on topics of importance across the state.

Quarterly and Final Progress Reports submitted by PI's on CRDF-funded research projects can be found at [citrusrdf.org/growers](http://citrusrdf.org/growers)