

# Answers to often-asked questions about CRDF



By Harold Browning

**W**e often get questions about CRDF programs and the research to find solutions to HLB, canker and other diseases. In this column, we will address some of the more often asked — and sometimes difficult to answer — questions. Some of these questions arose at a recent discussion with the Florida Citrus Production Managers Association, and are posed by many others in the industry.

How many research projects are currently being funded? The portfolio of research that is currently funded by CRDF is 130 projects, representing 68 new projects just getting started, with the balance being research that has been ongoing for the past one or two years. The vast majority of these projects focus on HLB solutions. Since CRDF provides financial support for projects that achieve adequate progress for up to three years of duration, we always have a balance of relatively mature and new projects. This allows us to begin new projects each year, incorporating the latest research results as well as to investigate new ideas and adapt to the changing environment of infectious disease.

What are the timelines for delivery of solutions to HLB? The urgency of protecting existing citrus trees from disease decline and to find ways to protect new plantings requires short timelines for solutions, and we hear frequently that time is our enemy with HLB. Short-term solutions have been a major focus of CRDF in sponsoring research on psyllid vector control, to evaluate treatments being applied to enhance infected tree health, and to evaluate other management tools such as therapeutic treatments for infected trees. Predicting exactly when research will be completed and the results ready for field use is difficult. Furthermore, if the results must pass through regulatory consideration or product commercialization, it becomes even more challenging to predict timelines.

One of the important objectives of our Commercial Product Development Committee is to develop timelines for these projects and to set aggressive goals and assure major steps in the delivery of the solutions will be completed. Clearly, timelines associated with development of resistant plants and their incorporation into new plantings is a longer term scenario. The time often is communicated as many years. Importantly, this aspect of the research has been under way since early in the infection of citrus canker in Florida (mid-1990s) and for a number of years specifically for HLB, and thus we are moving along the timeline toward that longer term end-point. The intent of CRDF and the scientists involved in HLB research is to keep the urgency of delivering multiple solutions foremost in our planning.

What are we doing about citrus black spot research? With citrus black spot concerns increasing, CRDF is encouraging the establishment of research priorities for this new disease. Since the disease currently has limited distribution in Florida, there is an opportunity to affect the rate of spread by better understanding the disease and its spread characteristics under Florida conditions. The University of Florida-IFAS is advising CRDF on research needs, and this will be considered as CRDF prepares for the next call for research proposals. This will complement citrus black spot research projects that are already under way with CRDF and other funding.

*Harold Browning is Chief Operating 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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