

# How closely is CRDF working with other citrus research organizations?



By Harold Browning

As the severity of HLB increases, and as the likelihood of detection of HLB increases in Texas, California and other citrus states, we must step up our efforts to coordinate investment in research that will provide solutions. The Florida citrus industry is making substantial investment in research projects that will develop, test and deliver solutions on short-term, intermediate and longer timelines. Since 2008, coordinated response to HLB has been led by Florida's industry, with funding coming from the production research tax and supplemented with diversion of funds collected in support of marketing and promotion of Florida citrus fruit and juice products.

CRDF is managing a wide range of approaches to understand how HLB infects and spreads, and to use this understanding to slow spread. The research focuses on the three major elements of HLB disease, namely the susceptible citrus plant, the vector insect, Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), and the presumed causal agent of HLB, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* (CLAs).

In order to use industry funding wisely, CRDF has developed a rigorous process for solicitation and review of pre-proposals and full proposals, to contract the most highly rated projects, and to monitor regular progress reporting and other measures of accomplishment.

We have discussed in earlier columns CRDF attempts to broaden funding for research, requesting support from other components of the Florida industry. In addition, state and federal funding has been dedicated to respond to HLB, and we partner with those entities to ensure best use of all available resources.

While there are a variety of targets for this funding, CRDF cooperates closely to ensure that all of the funding is coordinated in addressing the highest priorities. Some funds are used to track and report on spread of HLB, follow spread of ACP and to support grower assistance such as the Citrus Health Management Areas (CHMAs). Other funding supports research, but is managed to encourage broad interdisciplinary teams to present plans that will not only generate new knowledge, but lead to solutions. These solutions are likely to not only assist Florida to cope with HLB, but also to prevent or minimize the effects of HLB in the other states. The USDA, Specialty Crop Research Initiative program is such an opportunity.

With a variety of resources and broad challenges, cooperation and good communication are vital. For this reason, CRDF has engaged with industry research programs in California and Texas, communicating our program goals and determining where we can best work together. With the posting of CRDF project lists, progress reports and other details on our website ([www.citrusrdf.org](http://www.citrusrdf.org)), we are making this information widely available. Similarly, CRDF hosts project lists and progress reports from the Texas (Texas Citrus Producers Board) and California (Citrus Research Board) programs. Frequent discussions and meetings to share updates and plans further the goal of coordination of efforts.

Participation with national communication efforts, like those associated with the USDA, Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP) complement state-to-state communication. And finally, CRDF supports the biennial International Research Conference on HLB, encouraging scientists and growers to share global results and experiences.

All of these efforts combine to stitch together the ongoing work to find solutions to HLB. Ultimately, this organization provides a research system for the industry to mitigate the risk of production loss from infectious disease well into the future.

*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.*



Column sponsored by the Citrus Research and Development Foundation