



More on commercial product development

By James Dukowitz

In last month's column, we discussed how the activities of the Commercial Product Development Committee (CPDC) contribute to efforts to deliver solutions for HLB and canker. This column describes how the current project portfolio is not just about long-term solutions, but also can provide near-term benefits to the Florida citrus industry.

The CPDC project portfolio represents a balance of "short-term" fixes and long-term systemic solutions. Two of these projects are expected to impact growers as early as the end of this year. Canine scouting for citrus canker detection is building off more than a decade of research and has demonstrated very high detection accuracy for citrus canker in both plants and fruit in a variety of environments. J&K Canine Academy is currently entering the market through industry awareness programs and is providing canine scouting services to nurseries, groves and pre-packinghouse environments. J&K plans to submit a CATP12 research proposal to utilize the same training techniques for canine detection of HLB with a target to make this service commercially available by the end of next year.

Another project with near-term impact is the neonicotinoid label modification. The goal of this project is to expand labeling on imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam to include a second soil application during a calendar year at the current maximum labeled per-tree rate for young trees that are 5 to 9 feet tall. This will provide additional protection for these young trees against ACP and HLB. CRDF is working with companies producing neonicotinoid insecticides with the above active ingredients to obtain label changes for the state of Florida. We anticipate approval of the imidacloprid label change in time to allow for another application during October of this year, the clothianidin approval before the end of the year, and the thiamethoxam approval during the first three months of calendar year 2013. Growers representing a large majority of current producing acres in the state have written letters of support for the imidacloprid label change application. CRDF has been working closely with both FDACS and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) throughout the process to ensure that the foundation-sponsored research agenda in support of the neonicotinoid label modifications will meet EPA information requirements. These data will become available over the next citrus bloom season in spring. Based on these data, further modifications to the labels are planned.

In addition, the project portfolio has a number of strategic, longer-term programs with promise to help create lasting solutions to HLB, citrus canker and other diseases impacting the Florida citrus industry. This includes projects to increase genetic disease resistance to canker in mature plants; to combat HLB transmission through gene disruption in psyllids; to identify, test and evaluate new antibiotics to suppress HLB; to control Diaprepes root weevil through use of pheromones; to use CTV vectors to carry various anti-microbial genes to interrupt or prevent HLB disease; and to implement advanced citrus production systems for high-density plantings and related horticultural intensification.

By balancing the CPDC projects across vector, host and pathogen, and by providing a balance of near- and long-term impacts from these projects, CPDC aims to provide tangible, measurable and on-going economic benefits to the Florida citrus industry. Milestones and roadmaps for these projects were to be reviewed at the September CPDC meeting.

James Dukowitz is the commercial product development manager for CRDF. The foundation is charged with funding citrus research and getting the results of that research to use in the grove.

