

# Coordination of Research on Huanglongbing: Discussions Between CRDF and the California Citrus Research Board



*By Harold Browning*

**D**uring August of this year, members of the California Citrus Research Board (CRB) travelled to Florida to meet with CRDF board members and staff with the goal of exploring methods for cooperation in research related to huanglongbing (HLB). The day-long discussion focused on the two groups becoming more familiar with the processes used by each entity to solicit, review and fund projects of interest.

Particular emphasis was given to how timing of annual cycles might be synchronized to facilitate closer communication on research projects being considered. Currently the two groups are approximately six months apart in their timelines.

Participants discussed the current situation in California, with Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) populations expanding in some areas of Southern California and HLB detection to date being limited to dooryard citrus in the Los Angeles area. The group contrasted this status with Florida's situation, where ACP has been present since 1998 and HLB since 2005. This discussion demonstrated the different needs for growers in each region, and the possibilities that occur in California to apply research results to their early stage of experience with both the disease and the vector. Most importantly, it focused on the value of the wide range of research being pursued, from detection to integration of cultural practices into citrus management systems, and how this research will benefit each state.

Growers and research program managers from each state considered the research needs that are shared by both states and discussed how close communication will ensure that scientists supported by each program work in tandem to develop and field-test potential solutions. There are many examples where collaboration between scientists in California and Florida is being encouraged and can be further facilitated by close communication between CRDF and CRB. This also applies to research being conducted by scientists outside of these states.

While the status of the disease in Florida allows researchers to work with the disease and vector in laboratory and field throughout the state, limitations imposed on working directly with ACP and the HLB pathogen in California and other states mean that partnerships are necessary to effectively develop solutions to HLB that will benefit all. CRDF has encouraged and enabled multi-state research teams since the first cycle of research supported by Florida citrus growers, and the continuation of this broad reach for solutions will be even more important as other states face the disease in their citrus groves, and develop on-site field research with the disease.

The discussions between CRDF and CRB also covered how research areas that are of interest to both states can be distinguished from research topics that are of greater interest to one state and less so to the other. The emphasis for cooperative projects should be those shared areas of research interest, leaving each state to address their unique priorities in their own ways.

Opportunities for joint funding of projects were discussed, as was the potential for cooperation to be applied to federal funding to support citrus disease research. While establishing collaborative partnerships will be vital to implementation of any federal program for support of citrus research, the benefits of interstate cooperation have already been experienced, and the meeting of CRB and CRDF reinforced that there remain many opportunities to advance this cooperation in discovering, testing and delivering solutions to HLB.

*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.*

