

CRDF Commitment of FY 2013–2014 State Legislative Funding to Accelerate HLB Solutions



By Harold Browning

The Florida citrus industry successfully made its case for the need of support from the state of Florida in its battle with huanglongbing (HLB), resulting in a legislative research funding commitment for the fiscal year July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. This one-year commitment of \$8 million is specifically targeted to accelerate near-term research projects so they are advanced sufficiently to offer some more immediate assistance to the industry. In addition, the funding was designated specifically for (HLB) research. In presenting the rationale for this funding request, industry and CRDF representatives made several points that guide the use of these funds:

- The annual CRDF peer-reviewed proposal process is lengthy (seven months) and therefore cannot be used to obtain a new set of short-term projects for funding consideration in a one-year funding cycle. The outcome is that components of the current project portfolio are most appropriate for support.
- Projects being considered by CRDF's Commercial Product Delivery Committee (CPDC) are eligible for funding, and in fact, are supremely positioned for acceleration and enhancement support. As reported below, many CPD projects are being advanced through the planning and commitment of funds from the legislative initiative, and transition from research to delivery has been fostered.
- It was communicated that, although the legislative commitment is significant, the investment of this funding in 12 months of research is unlikely to bring about significant closure on research to delivery of a final solution or product, and therefore, the case was made for incremental funding to enhance and accelerate ongoing efforts.
- It is our goal to commit and spend this important funding from the Florida Legislature.

Planning that accompanied the request of the Legislature included preliminary review of the CRDF research project portfolio, and identified projects that might qualify for one-year enhancement funding. Following approval of the funding, this portfolio review was repeated and updated, leading to a list of recommended projects to be supported. These projects were reviewed internally and submitted for consideration by CRDF's Research Management Committee (RMC), whose recommendation was forwarded and approved by the board at its July 2013 meeting. Forty-nine near-term projects were approved at a cost of \$4,015,109.

CRDF then reached out to investigators to solicit their ideas on how to accelerate their research further. These plans also were submitted for review by RMC and approved by the board of directors in August and September, 2013. This led to approval of 27 project enhancements at a cost of \$1,990,946.

The CPD effort to identify projects that could be enhanced with this funding followed a similar path, with project investigators being requested to forward ideas on how their projects could move forward to field use more quickly. In some cases, new projects or participants were recruited during the CPD considerations to accelerate development of tools for HLB. These were brought forward for approval by the board, and 19 projects were approved at a cost of \$1,711,389.

The resulting commitment from 2013-2014 legislative funding totals \$7,717,444 of the \$8 million, and discussions are under way to complete the commitments as well as to monitor the implementation of this funding.

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.

