

Report on CRDF-sponsored Visit to Citrus Groves in São Paulo, Brazil to Better Understand Huanglongbing Management on Citrus

By Harold Browning

The CRDF Board and committees remain interested in bringing information regarding HLB management to Florida growers, from our own sponsored work as well as from other sources. To that end, a group travelled to São Paulo in late October 2013 to visit groves under various HLB management strategies and to observe field trials of various treatments. In addition, the group of three Florida representatives visited research laboratories at FUNDECITRUS and at the University of São Paulo, Piracicaba to better understand the levels of research under way and how they relate to research being conducted in Florida.



During the week-long visit, the team visited large and small citrus growers, being hosted by FUNDECITRUS and individual growers. Field sites encompassed mature plantings as well as new plantings, and ranged from highly intensive HLB management to groves that were heavily impacted by HLB and not receiving Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) treatments. We discussed management being used for HLB, citrus black spot and other diseases, economics of management, and alternatives to citrus for those groves with high disease incidence and declining productivity.

Several observations are noteworthy and may stimulate Florida growers to consider how these strategies might have a place in Florida citrus. Some representative unique situations present in Brazil that may not translate directly to Florida:

- São Paulo citrus growers have greater flexibility to consider alternative crops on citrus land, including coffee, sugarcane, corn, soybean, and rubber production.
- Large and small growers reinforced the existence and importance of border effects around the edges of citrus groves, and most implemented specific management practices targeting ACP and inoculum management.
- Aggressive inoculum reduction in both young trees and mature plantings has prevented the São Paulo industry from accumulating high levels of infected trees and reduced the threat of HLB, particularly to new spread.
- Ongoing field research evaluating nutritional and other treatments to mitigate the effects of HLB in infected trees is not definitive at this point. Some trials are in their third year in the field, but have not yet shown treatment separation.
- São Paulo citrus nurseries, like those in Florida, have moved into containment, and many large growers have established their own nurseries to provide for planting needs. One item of interest on the part of growers was planting larger caliper trees to shorten the grow-out time in the field once planted. While this lengthens the holding time in the nursery, it reduces exposure to ACP and HLB in the field and hastens the time when flushing patterns become synchronized with older trees.

The growers who participated in the visit were able to have one-on-one conversations with their counterparts and to interpret how the practices being used were affecting health and productivity of trees. A comprehensive, illustrated report of this trip has been posted to the CRDF website at citrusrdf.org. A link to the report can be found in the lower left panel on the home page with other report links. You are encouraged to read through this report and make your own conclusions about the application of these observations and those of others regarding HLB management in Brazil.

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.

