

CRDF Recent Activities of Interest to Citrus Growers

By Harold Browning



CRDF is engaged in an ever-expanding scope of activities in support of delivering solutions to HLB and to improve on tools available for citrus canker. This column highlights some of the recent activities that support these goals.

COORDINATION WITH FEDERAL FUNDING FOR HLB

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service HLB Multi-Agency Coordinating Group funding programs have released lists of HLB-approved projects, and CRDF has been engaged with the two groups in coordinating these new projects with our own ongoing work. In various ways, CRDF is participating in discussions of how these funding programs will continue in the next cycle. Several CRDF board members serve on the USDA NIFA Citrus Disease Subcommittee, and they are communicating priorities for the next round of proposals and giving feedback that could improve the interactions with the federal programs and CRDF research and delivery portfolios.

CRDF PROJECT REVIEWS AND NEXT STEPS

A significant number of CRDF-funded projects will be ending during the next few months, having completed their 1- to 3-year timelines. This includes projects focusing on research objectives that are funded as a result of the annual call for proposals and review cycle. In addition, many of the commercial product delivery projects whose goals are to move research results to the field or to commercialization also are reaching their end dates. The CRDF Research Management and Commercial Product Delivery committees are reviewing these projects with staff, and in March committee meetings, recommended projects that warrant consideration of full proposals for funding of the next steps. Investigators on these projects also have been cooperating in the process of determining which projects are making progress toward solutions and which of these projects have been assisted by the federal funding programs. In April and May, the next steps will unfold in review and ranking of new proposals so that the CRDF board can approve a slate of projects that can begin July 1.

I met with the executive board of the California Citrus Research Board (CRB) in late February to discuss how the programs for HLB can most effectively address industry priorities, and also how CRDF and CRB can continue to coordinate their efforts on HLB. Among the topics was co-funding of projects of common interest, which CRDF and CRB have been doing for a number of years. A joint meeting of CRDF and CRB also was discussed.

A presentation to the State Senate Agricultural Committee in February provided an update in support of the request for \$8 million in state funding to continue CRDF research and delivery projects. This state funding has been vital as a supplement to grower investment in HLB solutions, and will support the necessary CRDF projects as we transition to full implementation of the two federal funding programs for HLB described above.

Finally, CRDF participated as a sponsor and member of the organizing committee for the Fourth International Conference on HLB held in Orlando in February. More than 500 participants shared research results, ideas and new findings at this four-day meeting, advancing the search for solutions to HLB. The Grower Day held at the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Citrus Research and Education Center on March 12 summarized progress of greatest interest to citrus growers, with several presentations communicating the scientific meeting highlights.

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.

