

Committed to Clientele-Focused Leadership



By John Arthington

Hello. I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself and my new role at the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF). As many of you are aware, Harold Browning retired as chief operations officer (COO) to pursue other opportunities in private industry. At that time, Larry Black (CRDF president) and Jack Payne [University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) senior vice president] reached out to me and asked that I serve an interim role during the search to hire a new permanent COO.

The timing was appropriate. I'm currently in the middle of a 1-year special administrative assignment with Payne. The major emphasis of that appointment is aimed at fostering improved relationships between UF/IFAS and our production-agriculture stakeholders. This is a focal area that has always been central to my professional life. I joined UF/IFAS more than 20 years ago as a faculty member at the Range Cattle Research and Education Center in Ona where today I serve as the director. The center's faculty programs seek science-based solutions to help solve problems impacting cattle and forage production in Florida. Although I've been in this role for over a decade, I'm only the fourth center director in 75 years. This clientele-focused history emphasizes the commitment to long-held relationships between the center director and the agricultural clientele they serve. I'm proud of that legacy.

The mission of CRDF is to "Advance disease and production research and product development activities to insure the survival and competitiveness of Florida's citrus growers through innovation." In many ways, I believe the key to successfully achieving this mission will be based on a commitment to clientele-focused leadership. As a steward of grower funds and state and federal support, CRDF must focus on aligning industry needs with the creative skill and talent of the scientific community. In this relationship, our clientele are defined as both citrus industry and scientific community professionals. In obvious ways, these two groups differ significantly, which further emphasizes the importance of clientele-focused leadership at CRDF.

Citrus remains Florida's flagship agricultural industry. Although we are living in a trying and uncertain time, our future continues to be promising. Pioneering agricultural families coupled with 100+ years of research partnerships have made our citrus industry a Florida icon. The strength of this partnership has never been more critical. Today, CRDF is engaged in a number of important processes that will help shape future directions for the funding of research. To date, more than 400 projects have been supported. These investments help to improve our understanding of HLB and methods directed at improving the ability of citrus to tolerate HLB infection.

A new investment in research funding began this year. In late April, CRDF began to solicit new research proposals. Funding priorities will be based on a collection of inputs derived from stakeholder listening sessions, researcher inputs and a National Academy of Sciences review. Additionally, improved methods for communicating these research efforts and associated outcomes are being sought.

I encourage you to learn more about CRDF and our efforts to advance citrus science. Visit the CRDF website at <https://citrusrdf.org/> for more information and recent updates.

John Arthington is interim chief operations officer of CRDF.



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