

HLB Projects: Transition with Establishment of New Federal Funding Programs

By Harold Browning



The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) is working in concert with new federal sources of funding for HLB research to maintain the momentum of research and to transition roles in the presence of recent allocation of significant USDA programs addressing HLB. Those programs are:

- The USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Specialty Crop Research Initiative, Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program is a national competitive grant program designed specifically to support developmental and problem-solving research to address citrus HLB. The first cycle of the competitive process has been completed, and the results will be announced soon. A second cycle of solicitation for pre-proposals will be announced within the next few months, and all HLB researchers are encouraged to respond to this funding opportunity. This program is authorized for \$25 million per year for five years.
- The USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service was awarded funding to support delivery of near-term solutions to HLB across U.S. citrus states, with \$21 million to be expended over two years. This program is overseen by a Multi-Agency Coordination Group and has approved a number of projects since the program began. These funds will complement citrus industry and state legislative investments in research. Researchers should follow news and announcements relating to this funding program as well.

In the context of these new funding sources, CRDF recognizes that there is considerable additional funding available to address all aspects of HLB and to address citrus across all producing states. We strive to remain engaged in all aspects of the search for and delivery of solutions to HLB and will be communicating closely with the USDA programs and funded projects, as we have done in the past with the California and Texas industry HLB research efforts.

During this transition in funding availability, CRDF is also being impacted by the reduced funding associated with smaller citrus crops in recent years. Regardless, CRDF resources remain strong, and our goal is to transition more to field delivery of near-term solutions and to accelerate their evaluation, commercialization and regulatory approval. At the same time, we recognize the gaps that may occur in funding of critical projects during the initial periods of the new funding programs. To that end, we are carefully analyzing our current portfolio, paying special attention to those projects that are ending within 2015. Where federal sources have been committed or are pending, we can allow CRDF projects to transition to new funding. For others that have not yet obtained funding from the other programs, we will analyze results to date and assess the need for continuation of efforts. Where needs occur and other funding has not been committed, we are working toward a process for consideration of new proposals to continue critical work. Communication with project investigators is underway, and we have engaged the CRDF Research Management Committee and Commercial Product Delivery Committee in discussion and later will seek recommendations on projects to be considered for future funding. A process and timeline to address this need is under development and will be addressed by the board in upcoming meetings. Our goal is to prevent critical projects from being interrupted during this transition period. CRDF pledges to continue efforts to discover and deliver 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.

