

# Growers Give CRDF Strong Endorsement

By Harold Browning



The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services announced recently that growers overwhelmingly reauthorized the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) and its taxing authority for another six years.

Almost 88 percent of the growers voted yes, representing 90 percent of the voting acreage. Under state statute, the approval thresholds are 65 percent of the voting growers representing 51 percent of the voting acreage.

Every single major Florida grower group, including Florida Citrus Mutual (FCM) and the Florida Citrus Commission, supported a “yes” vote for the CRDF; so the landslide was not surprising.

The CRDF board of directors and staff offer sincere thanks to the Florida citrus growers for showing ongoing confidence in our mission. The partnership between you and the research community is paying dividends, and the CRDF is proud to play a part. Although I know there is frustration out there that we have not developed a concrete cure yet, the ingenuity and resiliency of this industry must be noted.

Our work continues.

CRDF-funded projects are now making great strides in providing new tools to help our industry survive — and ultimately thrive — in this challenging environment. A few CRDF-funded highlights:

- Creating a statewide network of citrus health management areas, which have done a tremendous job cooperatively killing the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP).
- Developing rootstocks tolerant to HLB. Many growers are including newly released rootstocks from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences breeding programs in their new plantings.
- Pushing for expanded use of imidacloprid, clothianidin and other pesticides to fight the ACP. Plus, the CRDF has helped push alternative strategies for ACP suppression, including biological control with *Tamarixia radiata*.
- Analyzing irrigation and fertilization programs best suited for site, soil and tree health situations. At the same time, advances in understanding the interaction of HLB with citrus root systems have enabled growers to apply specific management to improve or sustain root health.
- Scaling up steam thermotherapy for distressed trees.

Perhaps most importantly, the CRDF is leading the charge on getting two bactericides — streptomycin and oxytetracycline — registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We expect growers to be able to use these therapeutic compounds during the 2015–2016 season.

The CRDF strives for clear communication and transparency in all that we do. It is run by growers for the benefit of growers. We use several vehicles to disseminate information, including grower meetings, conferences and newsletters.

Again, I would like to voice my appreciation for the growers’ support during the referendum. In the past six years, the CRDF has helped provide research solutions as well as a deep reservoir of information, understanding and data regarding HLB. Finding answers in the laboratory and ultimately the field is not an easy process, but we are getting there.

*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.*



Column sponsored by the Citrus Research and Development Foundation