

# PFD Is Top Priority for CRDF

By Harold Browning



**H**LB has cast a wide net of damage on the Florida citrus grower, whether it's reduced yields, decreased ratios or weakened trees more susceptible to weather events.

One of the more troublesome issues has been the dramatic increase in reports of post-bloom fruit drop (PFD). What's even more concerning is that unlike past PFD cases, this outbreak hasn't been confined to one growing region. PFD is being found across Florida, and many growers say it is behaving differently than past incarnations. Like other HLB puzzles, the situation creates a lot of questions: Do we have adequate materials? Does El Niño's wet, humid weather exacerbate PFD? Is it timing? As you can imagine, the answers are varied.

Consequently, the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) Research Management Committee held a workshop this summer to engage growers and research scientists on potential solutions and opportunities in regard to PFD, which has quickly become a top priority for our organization.

At the workshop, targets for management and intervention were discussed, as were potential research questions that need to be answered. Historically, when the industry would have a severe PFD outbreak, growers had fungicides to combat it — products that are no longer available. Some new materials are helping this year, but clearly not near enough.

The CRDF said it planned to assemble data from ongoing field trials as soon as possible to determine if additional test materials and applications are necessary in spring 2017. The presumption is that current trials will be continued into the next season.

Pete Timmer, retired University of Florida professor who conducted much of the earlier work on PFD in Florida, summarized his view of the best practices for managing PFD in the current situation:

1. Pull non-productive trees, eliminating potential for winter bloom and inoculum buildup.
2. Focus on the major bloom period that must be protected.
3. Monitoring and treatment should begin early, especially when the main bloom is progressing. Begin applications when the first major bloom is coming on.
4. Prioritize blocks for their bloom progression and PFD pressure to schedule the most timely applications to those higher-risk blocks.

It was suggested the UF/IFAS 2017 Pest Management Guide would be a great vehicle to update growers on PFD. While some felt most of this PFD detail already is present in the guide, the group encouraged that review of the PFD section should be done with an eye on updating the broader issues of flush phenology, scouting, timing of applications and other details that were discussed at the workshop.

CRDF also has requested updated proposals from those working on PFD to add elements to address some of the questions being raised, building on what is already known about this periodic disease.

Once again, HLB has presented us with another complex problem that has to be dealt with efficiently. I can assure you the CRDF and its grower and research partners are on it. See [www.citrusrdf.org](http://www.citrusrdf.org) for the full white paper on the PFD workshop.

*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.*

