

# CRDF approves next round of 67 research projects



*By Harold Browning*

**E**ach year CRDF updates its research portfolio by requesting new project proposals from the research community. Projects are approved for up to 3 years, and thus most of the first-round projects established in 2009 are nearing completion.

In October 2011, 192 pre-proposals for new research projects were received and reviewed, leading to 114 full proposals being invited. The resulting 99 full proposals passed through two levels of scientific review, where experts evaluated the quality of science as well as the practical relevance of the research. Project reviews and rankings were forwarded to the CRDF Research Management Committee (RMC), composed of citrus growers, who then evaluated each proposal for its value in responding to infectious disease, primarily HLB and canker. As the final step in this process, CRDF's Board of Directors approved the recommendation of the RMC for 67 new projects. These projects represent a broad range of priorities addressing HLB: the psyllid vector; the citrus host plant; and the HLB pathogen. Priority areas of research on citrus canker also were included, and a few projects addressing disease-related interactions of other stresses and diseases of unknown etiology were approved. The list of approved projects, as well as the ongoing projects, can be viewed at [www.citrusrdf.org](http://www.citrusrdf.org).

Approximately 50 percent of the 2012 projects approved build on prior work that is focused on near-term solutions, as well as continuing directions to better understand the biology and development of the diseases, thus leading to longer-term solutions. These projects dovetail nicely with the projects already in place with citrus industry funding, and seek to move earlier results closer to field use. The total first year cost of the projects approved is approximately \$7.1 million and will bring the FY 2012-13 research project cost to approximately \$14 million, about \$2 million less than the previous year.

At the February board meeting where the projects were approved, RMC chairman Bobby Barben provided his thoughts on the process involved in bringing the best projects forward for support by the industry. Bobby attended the 3-day Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) meeting that provided recommendations on the quality of science and practical use of results to the RMC.

Bobby stated, "The Scientific Advisory Board is a group of very smart people who are very critical of the proposed work. They spent three-and-a-half days in deep discussion of the proposals, as well as spending a lot of time reviewing continuing projects to determine if the ongoing work is on target."

The SAB represents the disciplines involved in HLB and canker research, and includes citrus expertise as well as researchers working in other plant systems. Bobby reported that he was "happy to see that the new proposals being considered relied heavily on results of previous research funded by CRDF," demonstrating that the results are "foundational to the new CATP11 projects."

Bobby expressed his comfort in the process gained by observing the SAB in action and leading the RMC, adding that his confidence in the process was increased. The citrus industry and scientists alike should be confident in the process for selecting projects of greatest value, and also can feel encouraged by the strong leadership and commitment of Bobby Barben and the other growers representing the industry on the RMC.

*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.*



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