

CRDF Seeks Secondary Funding to Augment Grower Dollars

By Harold Browning



Progress Requires Fuel: The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) was established in response to an overwhelming need to expand research on HLB and other issues challenging Florida citrus. The Foundation relied on a National Academy of Science (NAS) blueprint for research priorities and recommendations on how to organize, conduct research and deliver results to growers. NAS also concluded that significantly increased funding would be required.

The industry responded, seeking diversion of Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) funding to meet research priorities. CRDF reached out to national and international experts to provide a more balanced attack, drawing on scientific and technical advances in other crops and across many disciplines. The result is the current robust research portfolio, comprising 116 continuing projects and 20 new projects. Continuing costs of this portfolio is in excess of \$15 million. With the process and priorities in place, CRDF now is focusing on developing a sustainable funding base to fuel this unprecedented effort. CRDF has established several approaches to supplementary funding to balance and complement citrus grower dollars.

Non-Profit Organizations: Many corporate and philanthropic foundations exist in the United States, organized to support a broad range of issues, including agriculture. CRDF has sought organizations whose goals match its own. More than 100 foundations were evaluated during recent months. Their goals and funding processes were reviewed, as were projects which they have supported. While there is potential to apply for support from some of these organizations, foundations supporting agriculture focus primarily on agricultural issues associated with basic food production and enhancing nutrition in developing nations. Efforts will continue to identify specific foundations whose program goals match those of CRDF.

SCRI and SCRI Block Grant: CRDF submitted an application in April to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, SCRI Block Grant, seeking \$1.8 million over a two-year period to support research on HLB and other emerging diseases. If successful, this grant would support as many as 20 research and delivery projects during the period from January 2012 to December 2013.

Allied Partners: Another approach being pursued is to solicit funding for citrus research in Florida from allied partners, those businesses which work closely with citrus growers, sharing the risks and benefits of citrus success. Working with various citrus industry groups, a comprehensive list of allied businesses has been compiled. Groups include those which provide support to production; harvesters and handlers; equipment and machinery suppliers; juice processors and byproduct companies; land and financial services, and many more. From more than 1,000 companies identified, CRDF will communicate with those most interested in helping support citrus research. This model has already yielded results, with significant multi-year commitments announced in late 2010 from a partnership between CRDF, Cutrale Citrus Juices, USA and Coca-Cola. CRDF, on behalf of the Florida growers, intends to develop further relationships with allied partners to generate funding support.

Success in efforts to seek secondary funding will allow for continued emphasis on solving HLB, while providing citrus growers relief from the financial burden of this significant effort.

Harold Browning is a consultant with CRDF, focusing on citrus research funding opportunities. The foundation is charged with funding citrus research and getting the results of that research to use in the grove.



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