



# GROWER RESEARCH REPORT

JUNE 2019

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**PAGE 2**      **Large-Scale  
Field Trials**

**CRDF Has a  
New Website**

**PAGE 3**      **Redefining the  
Orange**

**Certis Donates  
\$20,000 to CRDF**

**Research Management  
Committee Invites 27 Full  
Proposals**

**PAGE 5**      **Upcoming  
Meetings**

**Quarterly Project  
Managers' Reports**

## Change is in the Air at CRDF

*By Rick Dantzler, Chief Operating Officer of the CRDF*

In 2009, when CRDF was formed, it was critical to growers that they be able to turn over every rock in the attempt to find cures to citrus greening. Why? Because the disease was an existential threat, one which was thought to threaten the very existence of a commercial citrus industry in Florida.

Turning over every rock meant that CRDF would fund the very best research ideas, regardless of where they came from, as determined by a competitively bid process that included review by leading scientists from across the country.

When CRDF founders were considering how best to organize, numerous models were considered. Ultimately, the decision was made to become a Direct Support Organization of the University of Florida. Key to this decision was the assurance from Dr. Bernie Machen, then president of the University of Florida, in meetings between growers and State Sen. J.D. Alexander, that CRDF would have the autonomy to fund the best research - wherever it came from - in order to find answers for growers as quickly as possible.

With this assurance in hand, CRDF has funded research with the finest research universities in the country, including UC Riverside, UC Davis, Cornell, Penn State,

Stanford, Texas A&M, and the University of Florida. We've also funded citrus research in France, Brazil and Spain, all to get answers as quickly as possible.

CRDF has been willing to fund research with the private sector, too. For example, we currently have a significant and very promising project underway with Bayer Crop Sciences. It has been interesting to see how Bayer has set up its process for conducting research, and how it differs from what I have seen in the public sector.



Bayer has assembled five teams of researchers from different disciplines, all of whom are overseen by a project leader. Goals of the research project are shared with each team, and the project manager coordinates work between the teams to make

sure progress is occurring as quickly and effectively as possible. Also, when something promising is found, the project manager brings in regulatory persons from Bayer to make sure the product is something which will be able to receive federal approval, and if it's not the researchers move on to something else.

Research in the public sector tends to be much different. While the history of agricultural research in public land grant universities is one of America's great success stories, and while IFAS has

(continued on page 4)

*The Mission of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation is to "Advance disease and production research and product development activities to insure the survival and competitiveness of Florida's citrus growers through innovation."*

# Large-Scale Field Trials on the Way

Of the \$8,000,000 appropriation we received from the Legislature this year, legislators attached proviso requiring that \$2,000,000 be spent on large-scale field trials. It is anticipated that this will be a part of CRAFT, a large-scale field trial program organized by Florida Citrus Mutual and housed at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. If it is determined that legislative intent was for CRDF to have its own program, CRDF will have its own, but either way, CRDF will stay in compliance with the legislative directive and will soon be publishing a Request for Proposals to accomplish same.

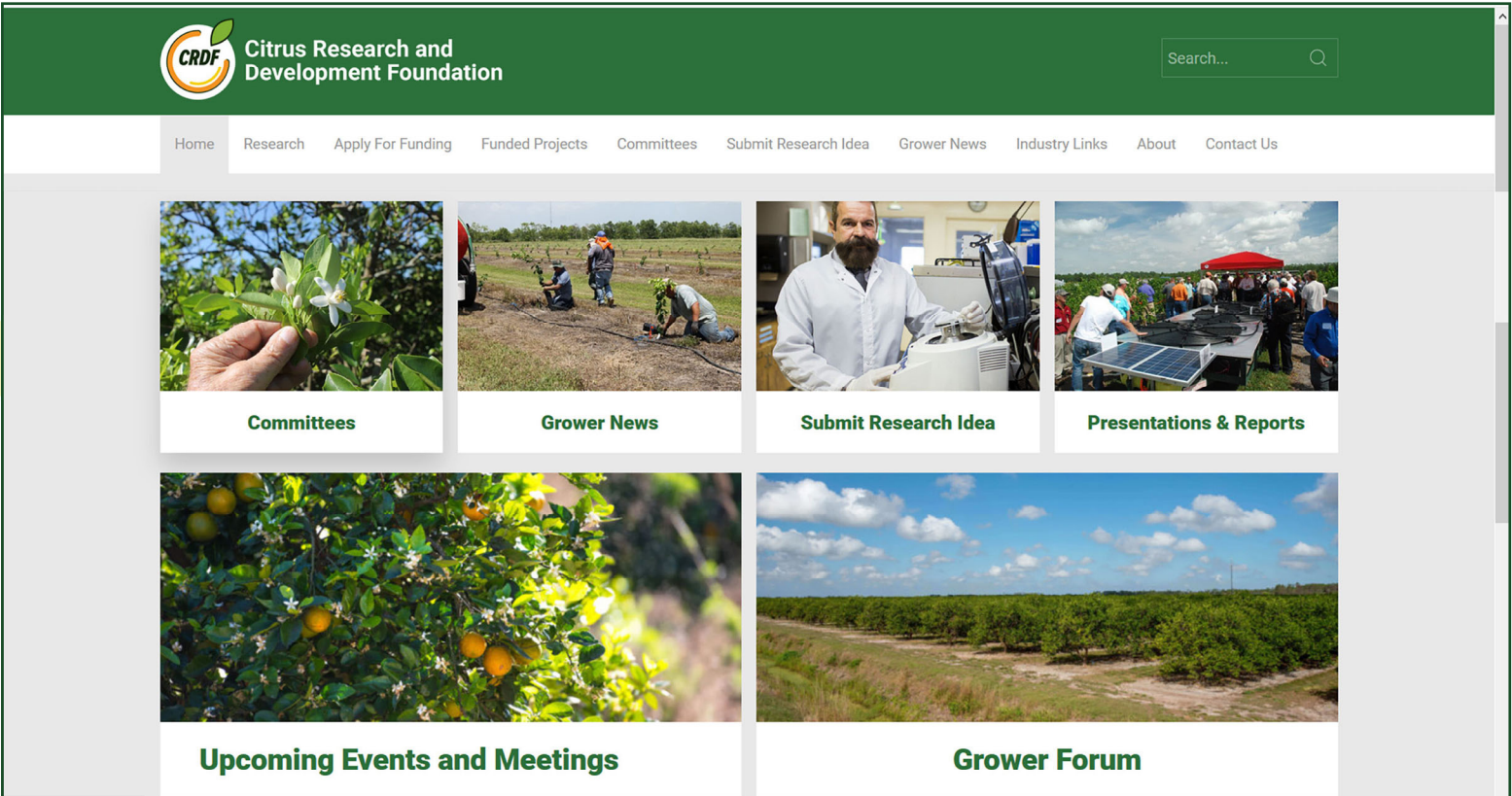


## CRDF Has a New Website - citrusrdf.org

CRDF has just completed a refresh of its website. We believe you will find it much more user-friendly and significantly easier to access our library of research. We have enhanced the search function for easier navigation.

A new feature of the website is a *Grower Forum*. This is a platform for growers to begin threads on anything citrus, and to ask each other questions. I'm a fly rod aficionado, and I enjoy forums with anglers where I can hear about their experiences with rods and angling adventures. My hope is growers will find the *Grower Forum* a place where they can converse and help each other out with growing citrus.

You'll also find a section on the website we call *Researcher Spotlight*, where you can hear directly from researchers who CRDF has funded. A complaint I've heard is how, in the good old days, the relationships between growers and researchers were more personal. The *Researcher Spotlight* will give you a chance to get to know the researchers better and learn more about what they are doing. I haven't met a researcher yet who isn't willing to work with growers in need, so perhaps by finding out more about our researchers and their work you can gain another resource to help you grow more citrus.





# Research Management Committee Invites 27 Full Proposals; Goals, Budgets and Timelines Now Due

In response to a CRDF Request for Proposals, 93 pre-proposals were received. A pre-proposal is a one-page summary of what the researchers hope to accomplish if the experiment is funded.

After considering all 93 pre-proposals, the Research Management Committee (RMC), led by David Howard, selected 27 for full-proposal status. This means the researchers have been invited to submit a detailed description of the goals and objectives of the experiment, a timeline and a budget for consideration by the RMC.

How many of the 27 are selected for funding will depend on the quality of the submissions and the amount of money CRDF believes it can commit.

## Redefining the Orange

The industry has started a discussion regarding possibly redefining the orange. Currently the standard of identity for OJ mandates greater than 90% of orange juice must be *Citrus sinensis* (with Ambersweet also permitted), but genomics studies show *C. sinensis* is not a true species, but just one example of a pummelo/mandarin complex hybrid.



One idea is that an orange be redefined as having a genetic background similar to *C. sinensis*, with a similar flavor, color and aroma. Why would this be considered? Because citrus breeders have developed hybrids that show significant HLB tolerance, and in taste tests various blends of orange and hybrid juice scored as high or even higher than con-

ventional orange juice.

This would be a significant change with numerous implications for growers and the industry at large. To help analyze these implications from CRDF's perspective, I hope to enlist the assistance of the CRDF Select Committee on Plant Improvement, a newly-formed committee chaired by Jim Snively. We will schedule a meeting in Ft. Pierce in July, so stay tuned for the exact meeting date and time.

## Certis Donates \$20,000 to CRDF



Left to right: Larry Black, CRDF Board President; Michael Dimock, Certis USA; and Rick Dantzler, CRDF COO (Photo courtesy of Certis USA)

At the Florida Citrus Mutual-hosted Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference, Certis donated another \$20,000 to CRDF, bringing the total amount donated to almost \$65,000 over the last few years. Monies donated are for the purpose of helping CRDF find a cure for HLB, and are made pursuant to the "Certis for Citrus" program in which Certis makes a donation to CRDF for every pound of Kocide copper fungicide purchased by a Florida citrus grower. CRDF is very grateful for the financial assistance, and thanks Certis for its generosity.

*The Mission of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation is to "Advance disease and production research and product development activities to insure the survival and competitiveness of Florida's citrus growers through innovation."*

the finest stable of agricultural researchers in the country, a Florida Citrus Hall of Fame public sector researcher once told me an issue with university research is the "silo effect," where researchers tend to operate only in their own spheres with relatively little interaction with researchers from different disciplines. There also doesn't seem to be a robust regulatory process moving concurrently with the research, so there is the chance that researchers are working on something that could never receive approval by regulators.

The "silo effect" simply doesn't exist in the private sector because a private company has its own money on the line and depends on the commercialization of a product in order to receive a return on its investment. As a result, private sector research tends to be more solution oriented. A private company does not have the luxury of conducting research simply to add to the library of knowledge; the project must be marching inexorably towards a solution or the plug is pulled, and the company moves on to something else. Researchers in the private sector are also not burdened by the need to publish papers on the path to tenure, as public sector researchers are.

The point is, any research portfolio needs both basic and applied research, and that means the portfolio needs a healthy mix of public and private sector research in order for answers to be found as quickly as possible. Universities set the stage for applied research by conducting the lion's share of basic research, and the private sector often finishes it off.

This research project with Bayer - and the research CRDF has funded with entities other than UF - has been possible because the DSO statute was interpreted by UF officials broadly, but this is apparently changing. CRDF has been told to expect two changes to our by-laws which we are told is a result of the statute being read more narrowly.

The first change would require CRDF to spend all research money with the University of Florida. The second would require UF ratification of CRDF research funding decisions. The CRDF board will not agree to these changes.

CRDF must not be constrained to fund only research at the University of Florida. It matters not that IFAS has an unbelievably talented group of agricultural scientists; there are great scientists in other places, too, and because growers have taxed themselves and directed us to find answers with this money, what choice do we have other than to spend it where we have the best chance of finding solutions?

Similarly, CRDF's board must also not be turned into an advisory body for the University. Board members - most of whom are growers themselves - spend hours reviewing research proposals. They study the comments of our Scientific Advisory Board, a group of distinguished scientists from across the country who advise us on the merit of the proposals, and factor in their own experience as growers to make funding decisions. If UF wishes to review the proposals for compliance with accounting standards and guidelines, fine; we welcome such oversight. But it is an

entirely different matter if the University intends to substitute its scientific judgment for the judgment of the board.

The University's decision to begin interpreting the statute more narrowly is reasonable even if we disagree with it, and it is one clause in particular which is problematic. It says that a DSO is "Organized and operated exclusively to receive, hold, invest, and administer property and to make expenditures to or for the benefit of a state university in Florida..." Heretofore, this was interpreted broadly, using the theory that expenditures benefitting the industry also benefitted the university, and so long as the university was the primary beneficiary of the funds then there was no problem. Since 65 percent of CRDF funds have gone to UF and because these possible by-law changes are a result of a recent review of DSOs, we can only assume that CRDF was considered in compliance.

This interpretation has now, apparently, changed. UF cites reasons having nothing to do with CRDF for instituting the change throughout all of its DSOs, but all DSOs are affected. Consequently, since it is more likely than not that we separate, the CRDF board has directed me to ask UF that we not be decertified until June 30, 2020, allowing adequate time to relocate. There are numerous reasons for such a long lead-time, not the least of which is it would give growers a chance to provide input on where they would want CRDF to land next, and state lawmakers would possibly need the next legislative session to make the necessary changes.

Can the relationship with CRDF and the University be saved? Of course it can, but UF would have to agree to CRDF positions on the two critical positions articulated above. The citrus industry is in a fight for its life, and CRDF must have the autonomy to find solutions as quickly as possible. We are more than willing to consider any reasonable change regarding oversight, but it can't tie the hands of CRDF board members who are doing their dead-level best to save this industry.

Will this relationship be saved? We'll know soon. I am involved in discussions with the UF general counsel and we will meet in a few days. Also, the UF Board of Trustees had hoped to have all by-law issues resolved by the end of this month with action taken at its September meeting. So, one day soon, whether we work it out or not, a reckoning is coming.

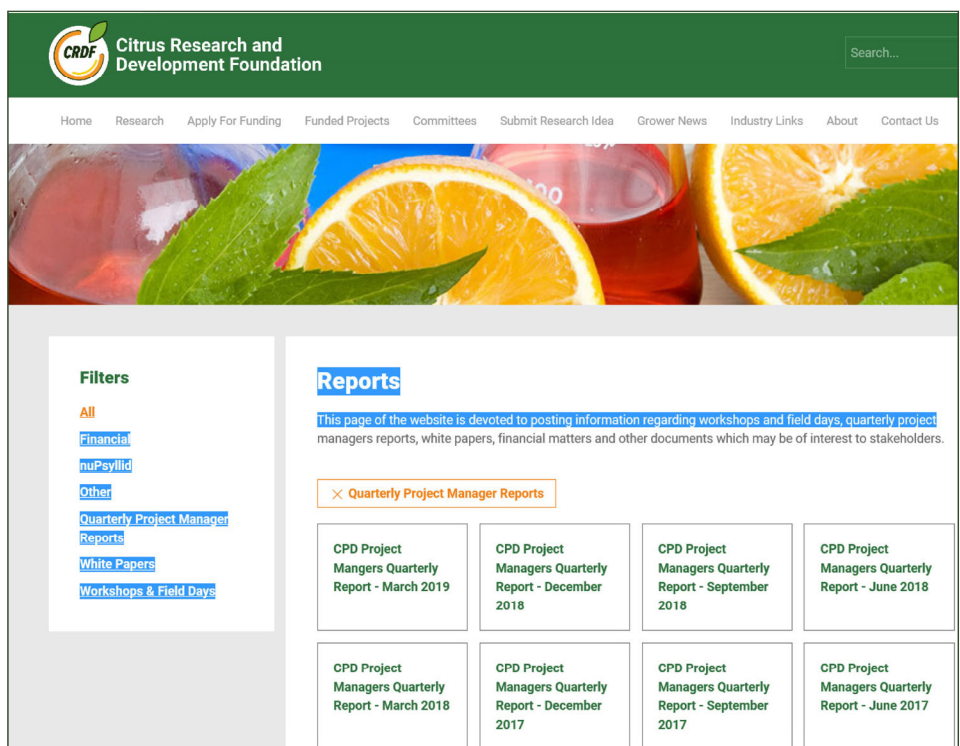
If a decision is made to separate, CRDF will need a new home. FDACS and the DOC are both logical possible new homes, but there are others. FAMU is the other land grant university in Florida and Gulf Coast University is developing an Ag Business program, although they would both be burdened by the same DSO statute that burdens UF. There is also a school of thought that it might be better for CRDF to be independent of any unit of government, although that would likely make it more difficult to receive governmental funding. Perhaps there are other models that we haven't thought of, so if anyone has an idea, I'm all ears.

*Rick*



# Quarterly Project Managers' Reports Available on Website

The quarterly project managers' reports provided to CRDF as a requirement of funding have become much more robust, for which I'm grateful to the researchers. I believe you will find the reports more meaningful. Because they have become more robust, though, they are much longer. In fact, for this Grower Report, they would fill 20 pages. The March 31, 2019 report can be found at [https://citrusrdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Qtr-Ending-2019-03-31\\_PM-Quarterly-Report.pdf](https://citrusrdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Qtr-Ending-2019-03-31_PM-Quarterly-Report.pdf). All of the Project Managers' Reports can be found at <https://citrusrdf.org/research/reports/>



CRDF COO Rick Dantzler served as the moderator at the recent Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference Educational Session.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### CRDF Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, July 16, 2019  
10:00 am  
UF, CREC, Lake Alfred

### CRDF Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, August 27, 2019  
10:00 am  
*Co-hosted with Gulf CGA*  
UF, SWFREC, Immokalee

## Contact the CRDF

(863) 956-8817  
(863) 956-5894  
700 Experiment Station Rd.  
Lake Alfred, FL 33850  
[support@citrusrdf.org](mailto:support@citrusrdf.org)  
[citrusrdf.org](http://citrusrdf.org)