



# GROWER RESEARCH REPORT

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## CRDF Resolves DSO Issue with UF

**DSO Issue Resolved:** Those of you who were at the FCM Citrus Conference in Bonita Springs will recall that the big issue for CRDF at the time was its status as a Direct Service Organization of the University of Florida. I am pleased to report that the issue has been resolved.

Without replaying all the issues, the conflict resolved around two points: was CRDF going to have to spend all of its research money with the University, and the level of authority the University would have over CRDF funding decisions. The resolution, which has been documented in a Memorandum of

Understanding, will allow CRDF to continue funding research from wherever it must to find answers for the citrus industry, and CRDF will agree to a review of its contracts for accounting standards and accountability measures but the University will not substitute its scientific judgment for that of the CRDF board's.

This is an excellent outcome for the Florida citrus industry. Disagreement stemmed primarily from different interpretations of a statute, each reasonable, but both parties always wanted to do what was best for citrus growers.

## Administrative Adjustments Lead to CRDF Savings of Nearly \$500,000

CRDF has saved a tremendous amount of money in administrative costs in the last year, to wit:

1. We changed our website management provider and contract and revamped our website, all while saving annual management fees of approximately \$33,250/year.
2. We renegotiated a contract with a critical industry partner that should save approximately \$27,000/year.
3. We eliminated the position of Business Manager, saving \$96,000 in costs annually. These duties were absorbed by staff.
4. Instead of having three salaried scientists, we use three contract scientists, saving approximately \$325,000/year. Sometimes this is not optimal, but we are getting the job done. We are, though, advertising for a Research Director.
5. We terminated a communications plan assessment and substituted it with a Grower Survey, conducted by FCM, which saved approximately \$15,000.

Together, these savings amount to \$496,000 (nearly half a million dollars), which is very significant for an agency the size of CRDF.

*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."*

## CRDF Receives Responses to Large-Scale Field Trial Request-for-Proposals

The Florida Legislature required CRDF to spend at least \$2 million of its \$8 million appropriation on large-scale field trials. Consequently, CRDF posted a Request for Proposals and received five submissions, including one from CRAFT for the entire \$2 million. The Commercial Product Delivery Committee (CPDC) meets soon to make its recommendation to the board regarding which proposals should receive funding. The board should make its selections by the end of September.

An emphasis on applied research, that research which takes what we have learned in the greenhouse or lab and scales it up to see if it would work commercially, is a CRDF priority. Large-scale field trials is a good example of this. It is important to remember, though, that field trials are primarily about learning how to live with HLB, not whipping it. Cures will come from basic and traditional research, so this cannot be dropped from our research

## RMC Considering New Proposals

CRDF received 91 pre-proposals as part of its 2019 Request for Proposals. Of these 91, the Principal Investigators of 27 were invited to submit a full proposal.

After review of the full proposals, eight were recommended for funding by the Research Management Committee (RMC) of CRDF.

Three additional projects were sent back for possible revisions and will be reviewed by the RMC at a later date.

## Industry to Receive Bayer Project Update in November

On May 1, 2017, CRDF - with significant financial assistance from private sector funding partners - began a project with Bayer Crop Science, the most expensive in CRDF's history. The project is paid through June 30, 2020, but the time is now to begin assessing progress to determine if it warrants further investment, and for this CRDF is asking for the industry's input.

Work for the project is taking place in Florida, California, France and West Germany. Our plan is to have Bayer representatives travel to Florida to address a joint meeting of industry organizations in November for a detailed update and status report. Following the presentation, CRDF COO Rick Dantzler will then lay out where the cost of the project is at, so the industry will have the information it needs to advise the CRDF board.

## Website Notes

CRDF is pleased to see the number of growers who have submitted a response to the Join Our Email List prompt on the new web page - citrusrdf.org. When fully developed, a notice will be sent when information is updated.

Six different researchers and their presentations are featured on the Researcher Spotlight page.

On the Industry Links page, access to the UF-IFAS Citrus Rootstock Selection Guide and Plant Improvement/Rootstock Trials has been added.

## New Research Format

The most common research format used by CRDF has been for general topics to be advertised, and researchers are invited to submit proposals through the RFP process which address these topics. This allows researchers a way to fund what they see as needs and opportunities, and works well.

CRDF COO Rick Dantzler is now considering an additional format, one that allows CRDF to write the experiment and then put that scope of work out to bid.

"I have often thought there were times when it would be more efficient to work directly with researchers in writing the experiment," said Dantzler. "This is an approach I am discussing with the board and industry partners as a way to insure that we are answering questions the industry wants addressed."

# Plant Improvement Committee Looks at Florida Sugarcane Model for Plant Breeding Program

Under the leadership of Chairman Jim Snively, the CRDF Select Committee on Plant Improvement is looking at the model for plant breeding used by the Florida sugarcane industry with an eye towards adopting certain facets of it for citrus breeding.

In sugarcane, a committee of 23 persons - researchers and industry representatives alike - oversee the breeding of new sugarcane varieties. Early decisions regarding what germplasm

stays in the pipeline are made by researchers, but what germplasm is ultimately brought to market is made by the industry based solely on data.

Citrus and sugarcane are significantly different in numerous ways and it will not be possible to replicate the sugarcane model completely, but there are elements that might be able to be incorporated that could create greater interface between the researchers and the industry, and get data to growers more quickly and effectively.

## CRDF Prepares Budget Request

CRDF currently has 44 projects under contract. Projects are typically for two or three years. The 2020-2021 cost of these projects is \$5,940,675.

CRDF is considering proposals submitted to the 2019 RFP at this time. It is not known how many will be funded, but the current budget sets aside \$1,000,000 for them, so this is included as an expense for the following year because most projects would have a second year cost that was comparable.

The current budget calls for a cash rollover of \$1.5 million. CRDF administrative costs are budgeted at \$1,053,767, although they are only slightly more than half of that because of the savings outlined on page 1.

Current expenses for year 2020-2021 total \$7,994,442, which doesn't include anything for Phase 2 of the Bayer project. It is also simply the nature of research projects that they can't start or stop at the beginning or ending of a calendar or fiscal year, so there is always a carryover in time of funding obligations.

Given the foreseeable and reasonable expectation of research needs for the coming year and factoring in on-going costs, legislative funding needed for FY 2020-2021 is \$8,434,442. Please know, however, that if CRDF were required to spend \$2 million of our appropriation on large-scale field trials, as the Legislature directed last year, we would be four million dollars down over two consecutive years. This means that there would be four million fewer dollars to support the projects under contract, which would most likely either cause projects to be terminated or far fewer new projects to be started. These are decisions CRDF is prepared to make, but will require the Judgment of Solomon.

## Project Scrutiny a Priority for CRDF

Researchers are required to submit a detailed final report at the end of a research project. CRDF plans to begin bringing researchers before the Board to share with them what was learned. Scientists from the Scientific Advisory Board will help prepare the CRDF board for these discussions.

CRDF will also implement a more rigorous review of on-going projects. This is in an effort to ensure that grower and legislative funds are being spent as effectively as possible. It is also prudent because if funding were to slip, an objective process would be in place to help make the difficult decisions of which projects to cut. This is especially important because there are currently 44 projects under contract, and by the time the Board finishes reviewing projects under consideration as part of the 2019 RMC RFP and the large-scale field trial RFP there could be as many as 55 projects under contract.

## Upcoming Meetings

Board of Directors, 9/24/2019, 10:00 am, in Lake Alfred

Board of Directors, 10/22/2019, 10:00 am, in Lake Placid