



Citrus Research and
Development Foundation, Inc.

PRESS RELEASE

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NIFA Grant Awarded to Continue Forward Progress on Bayer Crop Science Project

The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), along with its funding partners the California Citrus Research Board, PepsiCo, Inc. and The Coca-Cola Company, is pleased to announce that it was successful in receiving a National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant to continue the Bayer Crop Science project that began in 2017. The grant was in the amount of \$10,071,000 for two years, with the potential for a third year of funding of \$4,900,000 with satisfactory progress of the project.

The project began in 2017 with funding from CRDF, PepsiCo and The Coca-Cola Company. In 2020, the California Citrus Research Board joined the project and provided important financial assistance to keep the project going until the NIFA grant began.

The project has three objectives:

One, to build a high-throughput system that will allow anti-microbial compounds to be tested for efficacy against HLB. This objective has been accomplished. The high-throughput system is up and operating and approximately 500 compounds per quarter are being tested. The system is open to not just Bayer scientists, but other scientists from across the world as a service to the citrus industry.

Two, to develop a plant defense inducer (PDI) product that causes the tree to switch on its natural defenses to fight liberibacter. Research work on developing a PDI is quite far along and it is believed that a top development candidate can be identified during the lifetime of the three-year grant, with the goal to progress quickly towards registration.

The third objective is to develop an anti-microbial that will kill liberibacter. While this is not quite as mature as the effort to develop a PDI, with 500 compounds per quarter being run through Bayer's high-throughput system, it is just a matter of time before one or more are found. Five field trials



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in Florida are up and running to test promising candidates. "This grant will allow work on these promising products to be completed," CRDF's Chief Operating Officer Rick Dantzler said. "It is a great example of public institutions and the private sector working together to achieve a common goal."

Research universities also working on the project are the University of Florida, Texas A&M, and the University of California, Davis.

"By working toward a common goal, this coalition has made excellent progress on each of the three distinct approaches," said Denise Manker, R&D Expert Fellow at Bayer Crop Science. Manker has been overseeing the company's work on HLB for more than 3 years and serves as the primary liaison between the research teams. "Citrus growers need innovative solutions, and we're proud to work side-by-side with university researchers to help address this devastating disease."

The California Citrus Research Board (CRB) also helped fund a portion of the project, especially at a critical point where the research partners were waiting on the outcome of the grant application. "Success with this project will help all citrus growers, not just those from a particular state," noted CRB President, Marcy Martin. "We like it that CRDF and CRB were able to team up on this worthy project."

