

# New Year Priorities

By Rick Dantzler, CRDF chief operating officer



The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) board makeup is statutorily prescribed. Of the 13 members, 10 must be growers, two must be from the University of Florida, and one must be from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Of the 10 growers, five are nominated by Florida Citrus Mutual and five by the Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC).

At the beginning of the year, CRDF will be losing three outstanding grower board members: David Howard, Rob Atchley and John Updike. Howard and Atchley are former presidents, and each brought something special. Howard had a strong focus on plant breeding and ushered in the advent of “directed research,” a method of funding research that is quicker and more targeted. Atchley presided with a business-like approach, making sure the research we funded was not just an academic exercise. He also saw the entire field when deliberating. Updike chaired the Research Management Committee — the heart and soul of CRDF’s work. He read everything and was an encyclopedia of knowledge. He was always one of the smartest people in the room. I’m going to miss these gentlemen.

Taking their places will be Matt Machata, Sarah Spinosa and Trevor Murphy. Machata is a grower from the Lake Wales area and has an engineering background. Spinosa is involved with her family’s citrus operations and was once with the FDOC. Murphy is chief operating officer of Kahn Citrus Management out of Sebring. Each has a skill set that will fit nicely with research projects we will be considering.

So, what does the new year look like for CRDF? We have three high priorities. The first is to continue researching ways to squeeze the most we can out of oxytetracycline (OTC) usage, either by funding research on ways to get more product into the phloem or combining it with other compounds that maximize OTC’s efficacy or help the tree fight CLAs or other pathogens. The second is finding molecules or compounds that could take the place of OTC if the bacterium becomes resistant to OTC or the trees become damaged from multiple injections. The third is funding the development of the “tree of the future,” a tree that is sufficiently tolerant to greening or perhaps even resistant. CRDF is funding many projects on these priorities and is considering numerous others.

A question I sometimes hear growers ponder is: Are we down to funding priorities one and two to hopefully buy us enough time for the tree of the future to solve the problem of HLB, and nothing more? While I understand the sentiment given the toll the disease has taken, I believe it would be a mistake to settle into that way of thinking. Science and technology are moving too fast to put all our eggs into just three baskets. Scientific advancements we haven’t even imagined are right around the corner, so CRDF will continue looking for and funding the latest ideas as we push bravely into the new year.



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