



CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.

Plant Improvement Committee Meeting

Minutes

Thursday May 30, 2024

A meeting of the Plant Improvement Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Thursday, May 30, 2024, at the Alico Joshua Grove Conference Room, 12010 NE Highway 70, Arcadia, FL 34266. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM by Chair Joby Sherrod. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Committee members participating were Steve Callaham, Peter Chaires, Chris Gunter, Nate Jameson, Wes Johnson, Scott Lambeth, Brandon Page, Erin Roszkopf, Joby Sherrod, Taylor Smith, Jim Snively, Sarah Spinosa, Matt Story, Rosa Walsh, and Tamara Wood.

Mr. Sherrod noted that the minutes of the February 15, 2024, Plant Improvement Committee meeting were included with the meeting materials. Mr. Snively made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Dr. Roszkopf seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Sherrod asked Mr. Dantzler to provide an outlook of the CRDF funds available for new research. Mr. Dantzler noted that, with CRDF receiving \$3 million from the Legislature this session, the Board has drafted its budget for the next fiscal year with \$1.4 million for new research (exclusive of the Crop Transformation Center funding). Other potential funding sources were discussed.

The discussion was within the context of the Grand Plan proposal which was on the agenda for review. Mr. Snively questioned the decision not to establish a stronger and continuously funded breeding program and pointed out that it is a failure to not include the plant breeding experts in determining the allocation of funds going forward. Mr. Dantzler explained the steps CRDF had taken, including convening a national panel of breeding experts to advise it of how to spend what appeared to be a diminishing amount of funding, to give the Board confidence to continue funding the program at UF/IFAS. A primary recommendation of the panel was to inventory and evaluate what had already been created, and this took time. Mr. Snively reminded that it takes years to produce a new variety, stressing the importance of ongoing funding to not interrupt the process. He suggested that a substantial, multi-year funding commitment to plant breeding be presented for consideration at the next legislative session.

Mr. Snively asked that, "Since it was stated that there is not sufficient CRDF funding for the Grand Plan proposal as presented, what is being asked of the Plant Improvement Committee?" Mr. Dantzler responded by saying, "To provide feedback to determine which parts of the project to fund."

Dr. Matt Mattia made a presentation of the USDA/IFAS 3-Year Grand Plan and answered questions as they arose, along with Dr. John Chater. In response to a question about overlap with federal funds granted, Dr. Chater explained that the project's specific objectives included the two trials that Dr. Michael Rogers addressed in his CREC newsletter that have been planted on the DeLuca site and noted that the Grand Plan objectives do not overlap.

It was suggested that Drs. Mattia and Chater amend their proposal to create a smaller-scale model to guide their efforts, which could then be expanded if additional funding is obtained.

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Next, Mr. Wes Johnson presented an update on the Coca-Cola Company Project 23-031 in which they evaluated over 1,000 samples of fruit from various research locations, which included measuring Brix, ratio, color, fruit size, fruit firmness, flavor, and score.

Mr. Nate Jameson gave a presentation on viroid use in Australia for high density planting of dwarf trees to gauge whether there is interest in this in Florida. He offered to prepare a proposal for conducting a small trial in a controlled environment to assess its potential benefits and drawbacks. Dr. Smith noted potential regulatory pathways obtaining a Federal and/or State permit, so they should initiate a conversation with USDA to determine if there was interest in Florida. Questions to address included whether the Florida industry wanted to pursue it, which would be a prerequisite for DPI to initiate testing and regulatory approval, and whether CRDF had interest in funding a small trial. Mr. Irey weighed in on his experience, and Dr. Smith noted if the industry accepted it, it would be in the hands of commercial nurseries instead of CRDF, and at a secure location. Mr. Chaires expressed that he would like for the conversation to continue.

Mr. Brandon Page discussed a potential project for the industry to use CUPS as a controlled environment to determine the effect on roots and tree health from the use of aldicarb, and asked if there would be support from the committee. A concern expressed was the possibility of aldicarb leaching past the rootzone and getting into the environment. The idea was received tepidly, at best.

With no public comments, the meeting was adjourned at 12:16 PM.

Minutes submitted by Barbara Thompson.