



Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

June 11, 2025

A meeting of the Board of Directors, Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point, Blue Heron Room, 5001 Coconut Road, Bonita Springs, FL 34134. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 2:36 PM.

Roll was called and a quorum was present. Board members present were Jerry Frankhouser as proxy for John Davis, Chris Gunter, George Hamner, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Ron Mahan, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

President Morgan Porter welcomed those in attendance and offered words of encouragement to the citrus industry. "Today's discussion is not just about numbers. It is about investing in the survival and recovery of Florida citrus."

She noted that the minutes from the April 22, 2025, Board meeting were included in their packet for review. Mr. Mahan made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

Public Comments: None.

Executive Committee: Did not meet.

Finance and Audit Committee: Mr. Mahan noted that the F&A committee had met and reviewed the financial statements through May. He made a motion that the Financial Statements be approved as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

Mr. Mahan noted that the draft budget for Fiscal year 2025-26 had also been reviewed by F&A. He asked Audrey Nowicki to present the highlights. There is a cash carry forward of approximately \$600,000 from the previous year. With the box tax receipts down considerably this year, the budget includes a projected spending of \$700,000 in box tax revenues. CRDF is anticipating \$4.5 million in legislative support, which would bring all revenue for the coming year to \$6.2 million. Administrative costs have remained the same over the past few years as have our research operations costs. The biggest changes were in the research projects. The current portfolio projects \$3.8 million this year. If the \$4.5 million legislative appropriation comes through, that would allow \$1.2 million in uncommitted funds for research in the 2025-26 fiscal year, projecting ending the year with about \$260,000.

Mr. Mahan moved to approve the 2025-26 budget to send to Gainesville for final approval. The budget included CRDF's miscellaneous contracts. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler gave a brief outline of contingencies for making the budget work for the 2025-26 Fiscal Year and recounted a few points of fiscal history, including the amount of box tax revenues over the last six years. This year, box tax revenues are down to \$557,000, so CRDF will be almost totally relying on Florida legislative funding. There are 62 projects under contract which would cost \$3.8 million for the 2025-26 FY, which could necessitate such actions as terminating projects or not granting NCEs if additional funds are required.

Regarding future expenses, the Pathway 3.0 document outlines research priorities. The document is marked DRAFT. Input from growers is encouraged.

Governance Committee: Did not meet.

Plant Improvement Committee: Chair Joby Sherrod noted that the Plant Improvement Committee did not meet but Wes Johnson provided an update on the Coca-Cola project about changes to the specific scions being used and new information on the location of plantings he is recommending. A Plant Improvement Committee meeting would be forthcoming where they would view that recommendation, after which it would be brought before the board.

Research Management Committee: Chair Matt Machata presented the report for the June 3, 2025, meeting as follows:

Amit Levy – Improving the Systemic Uptake of Therapeutic Compounds by Trunk Injections – Project #22-017. This project terminates on August 31, 2025, and has a balance of \$70,770. There was discussion of grove management issues and project oversight which had caused problems. Dr. Rogers said he recently assumed oversight of grove management and changes would be coming. Dr. Levy is requesting a no-cost extension to complete the third year and collect yield data. Mr. Hamner made a motion to discontinue this project by not granting the NCE requested. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hunt and passed unanimously.

R. Simon, Silvec – Silvec is requesting that CRDF sponsor a Section 18 application for Gen2 of its spinach defensin peptide. It is estimated to receive its EPA approval for Gen1 in September of this year. Improvements in Gen2 over Gen1 were discussed. Silvec needs CRDF or an entity like it to make the application. If successful, they would be able to commence large-scale commercial trials in early 2026. RMC recommended that CRDF proceed with sponsoring Silvec's Section 18 Label when data showed it to be ready. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

U. Albrecht #21-032 continuation – CRDF 2023 rootstock trial injection. RMC recommended approval for 2 years at \$101,460 to approve the additional scope of work and an additional 2 years of budget. Mr. Machata presented this as a motion. It was seconded by Mr. Mahan and passed unanimously.

C. Messina (25-003) – 'Six Fifty-one: Production of plants to evaluate fifty-one genes efficacy to increase citrus tolerance to HLB in six locations' – Discussed project in conjunction with the Dutt transgenic preproposal. RMC recommended requesting a revised proposal to address: reducing the number of sites from 6 to 3 and replications from 5 to a lower number, making sure Drs. Messina and Dutt are working closely together to ensure there is no overlap between the two and the target genes are prioritized. It was suggested for Mr. Dantzler to meet with Dr. Dutt and Dr. Messina to merge their two projects together.

Dr. Dutt had noted to RMC that the reason he made a separate proposal was because he focuses on transformed rootstocks, while Dr. Messina focuses on transformed scions.

M. Dutt preproposal – Multi-location field evaluation of transgenic rootstocks budded with non-transgenic scions –RMC recommended inviting a full proposal with the assurance that this project is working closely and in full cooperation with the Messina Crop Transformation Lab in Gainesville. Things to address: 1) reduce budget, 2) align with Messina project, 3) prioritize the genes to get a more manageable number to evaluate, 4) use two sites versus three sites, and 5) use rootstocks which have a higher probability of regulatory approval. Mr. Machata made a motion to invite a full proposal of a combined effort between Dr. Messina and Dr. Dutt. Ms. Spinosa seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Both RMC and the Board were in consensus that all projects should go through the Crop Transformation Center but would be considered case by case.

Dutt, Chater, Grosser (25-002) – ‘Field evaluation of select HLB tolerant sweet oranges on improved rootstocks’ – RMC’s recommendation was to revise and re-submit, with a lower-cost budget and addressing concerns that there was not enough information on selections provided in the proposal and excessive costs, including \$40,000 for grad student in year 2. No action was taken by the Board. They would wait until RMC weighs in on the revised submission.

C. Arrant – ‘Evaluation of commercially available chemicals for use in trunk injection of citrus’ – RMC’s recommendation was to fund the project in collaboration with Dr. Heck, which is included in the proposal. Mr. Mahan seconded the motion to approve funding and it passed unanimously.

H. Yonce, continuation of #23-048 – Third year of OTC injections on Valencias in Avon Park at year 2 rate (\$16,000) – RMC’s recommendation was to fund year 3 but request researcher to provide a comparison of annual results to assist growers in determining if year 3 is cost-effective. Mr. Page gave a brief overview of the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mahan and passed unanimously.

M. Irey, Southern Gardens Diagnostic Lab – Support of PCR testing, continuation of #21-002C – RMC’s recommendation was to continue funding. Mr. Hamner seconded the motion and the Board approved funding with the option not to exceed \$260,000.

L. Stelinski – ‘Prevalence of ‘Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus’ and insecticide susceptibility in Florida field populations of Asian citrus psyllids’ – RMC’s recommendation was to invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mahan and passed unanimously.

H. Yonce – ‘Evaluating Cu/Zn compound for injection into citrus for suppression of HLB’ – failed for lack of motion to request full proposal. Mr. Machata noted that although there was no action taken, the cost for such a small project was questioned, as well as whether the copper/zinc formulation would have to seek full registration if it were not an adjuvant or had current registration. After board discussion, it was decided to possibly bring it back to RMC for a second look.

Yu Wang – Service contract – This is a service contract for antibiotic residue analysis. There was no action by RMC. CRDF is waiting on cost estimates for her work. This work could be important if additional

antibiotics are pursued for use by growers. It is anticipated that a per test price is how the project would be structured. No action is needed.

T. Aglave – ‘A Grove-First approach to evaluating curry leaf extracts by direct injection for HLB management project’ – RMC’s recommendation was to invite a full proposal in collaboration with Dr. Heck. She will be a summer intern with Dr. Heck in the Grove First program. The funding would only be \$10,000 for 2 years (not the 3 years requested) since she will be graduating from high school. If a 3rd year is needed, she can request funding at that time. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mahan and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler led the upcoming discussions on the agenda beginning with the Alico Rootstock Trial – This is a 24-acre rootstock trial that Alico has been caretaking for 2½ years – CRDF is covering the cost of another month of caretaking until a decision is made whether to maintain the trial. Mr. Sherrod indicated that the trees are not exceptional, but they are alive. There is no guarantee of future yield. It was questioned whether there is anything else we can do with these trees that would have scientific use. This could be an opportunity to test some high-risk chemistries that may kill trees, since these trees are not going forward. Mr. Hamner made a motion to drop the caretaking and discontinue. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.

Next was UF’s intent to license invention disclosure – This is a contractual right to license project discovery by Nian Wang. This relates to Dr. Wang’s discovery that suckers from tolerant rootstocks can impart tolerance to scions if allowed to grow. UF intends to pursue a patent. RMC does not recommend CRDF becoming the licensee for this technique. There was no action needed.

Regarding OTC and streptomycin product development, researchers found that the combination of Strep and OTC may not be as effective as we anticipated, so this project may not be as important as initially thought. No action was needed.

L. Diepenbrock CUPS project update – RMC found that the CUPS study was still important and study was likely needed. CRDF was contacted by CUPS growers indicating that Lebec mealybugs are a serious concern. Dr. Diepenbrock had originally come to CRDF with a proposal that was very broad and had an extremely high budget. RMC is requesting that she resubmit with a more targeted approach and a significantly reduced budget.

Collaborations with Fundecitrus – Fundecitrus has transgenic plant material that repels the psyllid. CRDF has asked to test these trees in Florida conditions. Fundecitrus is agreeable, assuming regulatory approval is possible. Details are being discussed.

Dr. Jerry Frankhouser, standing in for Dr. John Davis, stated that he had earlier given the IFAS update at the Florida Citrus Mutual session. Dr. Messina’s effort to transform plants with new gene concepts is exciting. Rapid grow houses have been installed on campus in Gainesville and are ready to accept plants.

He also spoke of a network of scientists in national laboratories working together to leverage new technologies and scout for solutions, including an effort to work with 15 countries in Latin America looking at biological controls for the psyllid to expand transformation capacity and field evaluations, and also to

reduce regulatory burdens. There has been \$50,000 identified in funding approved to bring together world experts in HLB to Gainesville and put in place a regional plan to fight HLB, with resources to be developed. Another effort that Dr. Angle wanted noted was the plant pathology department within UF-IFAS. Researchers there are working with the University of Central Florida to cooperate on nanotechnology as another possible pathway to control psyllids.

Dr. Gunter added that from the Horticultural Science side, he was excited to see what the educational program brings. He encouraged everybody to attend. Dr. Messina will be there specifically talking about the CTC and their efforts. This would be a great time to learn about the program and what is happening and then hear from the researchers directly about their funded projects.

A discussion ensued on talk of using citrus acid with OTC and how it either enhances it or lengthens the time in the field when the OTC stays effective. Some growers are doing very small tests to see if they can make citric acid work better than muriatic acid with OTC, and they seem to believe there is great promise. Cole Arrant added that he is considering adding citric acid and ascorbic acid to those he is testing for the USDA through his previously funded proposal.

Public Comments: None

Future Meeting: The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on July 22, 2025; location will be announced.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:06 PM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.