



## **CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.**

### **Research Management Committee Meeting**

#### **Minutes**

**Tuesday, September 23, 2025**

A meeting of the Research Management Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at the Jack Stroup Civic Center in Sebring, Florida. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM by Chairman Matt Machata. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Committee members participating were Dr. Scott Adkins, Bobby Barben, Holly Chamberlain, Ned Hancock, Ed Leotti, Matt Machata, Charlie McKee, Morgan Porter, Dr. Brian Scully, Wayne Simmons, and John Updike.

Mr. Machata began by reading the Foundation's Mission Statement, as well as portions of the Bylaws relating to RMC's duties, within the context of litigation between ReMedium TI and AgroSource, Inc. He noted that the matter will be addressed later in the agenda.

Mr. Machata stated that the minutes of the August 19, 2025, Research Management Committee meeting were included with the meeting materials. Ms. Porter moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Adkins and passed unanimously.

Regarding the preproposals received in response to the RFP on 'Approaches to speed up the transition from juvenility to maturity,' he shared the views of the Scientific Advisors that many of the preproposals received were on flowering and did not specifically address the specific research which the Foundation was seeking. He wondered if for these it might be better to choose the desired objectives from each project, followed by a round table discussion with these researchers for the purpose of designing a project that better hit the target.

Dr. Scully said there were parts and pieces of each preproposal that he liked and didn't like, five being molecular based, noting that a direction could be to ask Dr. Messina to meet with the researchers and put together a single proposal that included the best objectives from each preproposal. He thought that Dr. Bowman's preproposal was conventional and should be considered on its own, but the molecular researchers should be asked to collaborate on a single project. Ms. Porter noted there is some crossover between the conventional and molecular projects. Mr. Hancock made a motion for staff to review and combine the molecular projects into a single directed research proposal and to consider Dr. Bowman's and Dr. Nian Wang's preproposals on their own. The motion was seconded by Mr. Leotti.

Dr. Diepenbrock mentioned that this approach was taken with the Diaprepes project, which worked.

Dr. Dawson suggested more precise direction from staff to Dr. Messina. These projects are doing a permanent change to juvenility; we only need a temporary change, with plants that flower differently five generations from now. Mr. Machata said we have Mr. Hancock's motion and asked for a vote; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata introduced the first preproposal from Dr. Bowman, *Manipulating Juvenility-Associated Tolerance to Increase Profitability of Sweet Orange*, and asked Dr. Syvertsen to summarize the preproposal and reviews, which he did. The reviewers felt it is speculative that avoiding IPCs may not be advantageous and did not strongly support inviting a proposal.

Dr. Scully discussed adding Tobias as a potential additional genotype to work with since Tobias can flower in two years. He asked Dr. Bowman several questions regarding same. Ms. Porter made a motion to recommend the Board invite a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Dr. Scully and passed.

Mr. Machata introduced Dr. Nian Wang's preproposal, *Shorten the juvenility of non-transgenic Eds1 and Dmr6 edited citrus*, and asked Dr. Dawson to summarize the project and share the reviews, which he did. Ms. Porter suggested he show a budget for each objective since they are mostly standalone. Mr. Dantzler shared how the proposal came about, that this project was not submitted through the RFP, it was received prior to the announcement to help get EMS1 and DMR6 out of juvenility as quickly as possible. Mr. Hancock asked if this was funded previously and by whom, sparking a discussion of Chapter 601 language and whether DOC had rights it could assert.

This led to a discussion of CRDF's possible royalty interest. Mr. Hancock said that costs are being passed along to the growers, which led to Ms. Porter making a motion requesting that Mr. Dantzler track down the status of royalties on CRDF-funded projects that might be owed to the Foundation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Leotti and passed.

More discussion ensued on the Soilcea licensure agreements and the amounts of licensure fees and royalties. Ms. Porter said the industry has concerns over this, that a great deal of money has been spent on research but royalties have not come back to CRDF to fund more research. Dr. Gunter noted the long time it takes to get a return on technologies which are developed, and that many people from the university are working every day to get a solution. Dr. Scully said RMC has opened this topic and that it should be brought before the Board noting the Board might consider putting a group of people together to visit with the Sr. Vice President to discuss these issues. Dr. Gunter pointed out that if you want clarity, the people who can provide it aren't in this room.

Dr. Scully made a motion to request Dr. Wang itemize his budget by objective with a revised preproposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Leotti and passed.

Mr. Machata moved to Dr. Alferez's proposal #25-006, *Optimizing the use of individual protective covers and therapeutical materials to effectively protect young citrus trees against HLB*, and invited Dr. Futch to summarize the project and reviewers' comments, which he did.

Dr. Scully suggested combining the discussion of this project with Dr. Santra's proposal #25-007, *Novel trunk injection carriers for improving OTC and Zn distribution in HLB affected citrus trees*, because the same personnel are being used in both proposals and the same company is testing different adjuvants.

Mr. Leotti said he and other growers have been unable to replicate results with brassinosteroids.

Mr. Machata noted that the adjuvant being tested might be of benefit to growers.

Moving forward, Mr. Machata brought forth Dr. Santra's proposal #25-007, and asked Mr. Page to summarize the project and reviewer comments, which he did, summarizing objectives and noting overlaps with the Alferez proposal.

Mr. Barben asked questions regarding the size of the particle and what would happen to OTC, would it be nano-sized as well? The project has potential if we will see any good results. A comparison was made with the Grove First Phase 1 research where they got canopy response and vegetative improvement when injected. Ms. Porter noted she would support the project except for the budget. Ms. Porter moved to recommend inviting Dr. Santra to submit a full proposal. It was seconded by Mr. McKee and passed. Implicit was that the adjuvant from Dr. Alferez' trial be added.

Dr. Diepenbrock presented the progress on her project #22-014, *Developing management for Bulimulus bonariensis snails in Florida citrus*, for consideration of third-year funding in the amount of \$100,134. Dr. Scully moved to approve the third year of funding. Mr. Barben seconded the motion and it passed.

Mr. Machata started the next discussion by saying that TJ Biotech had recently brought a lawsuit against AgroSource. He noted that Dr. Jim Graham, a Project Manager for CRDF, is serving as an expert witness for TJ. . Mr. Machata stated that he disagreed with Dr. Graham's participation in this matter, but felt CRDF has an obligation to be neutral. He noted that what we have seen is there is no tangible difference between products results, which suggests a personal bias on Dr. Graham's part, and that he is compromised on OTC products. Dr. Graham has said he didn't realize he was putting CRDF in this difficult position. He suggested that the question for RMC was whether CRDF was conforming with its Bylaws by remaining neutral.

Mr. Machata then read from the Complaint in which it quotes Mr. Dantzler's comments in his monthly Citrus Industry column. He then read Mr. Dantzler's comments directly from the column, which were different. Mr. Machata is concerned that if growers see the Complaint, they would believe Mr. Dantzler was endorsing ReMedium over Rectify, which he was not, and that CRDF

and Mr. Dantzler were not acting neutrally. Mr. Machata said Dr. Graham was acting in his individual capacity and not as a representative of CRDF.

Mr. Dantzler said he has spent a lot of time on the phone with UF general counsel on this matter, and shared examples of how CRDF had attempted to be neutral. He then walked the committee through what the CRDF board had done to date. He also said he had recused Dr. Graham from all projects involving OTC.

Ms. Porter said the Board did not take action against Dr. Graham at its meeting, that it is not up to CRDF to decide if he is qualified or not qualified. If there is discussion, it should revolve on how the Foundation can best remain neutral and be here for the growers? We cannot change the situation or the action of others. We have to decide how to remain neutral as a committee and as a board.

Tom Johnson of TJ Biotech was recognized and discussed differences between the products He also shared the role of Dr. Graham in the litigation, as well as why the costs between the products are different.

Ms. Porter stated we are interested in remaining neutral throughout this case.

An unidentified grower said he was surprised Dr. Graham was involved, and that while it might not be a legal conflict, it has created concern in growers' minds, especially if there is no evidence to support the position.

Tom Johnson was recognized again and shared the claims of TJ Biotech and what could be expected from the therapy. He then offered comments on the general results of all litigations and how it takes away from the scientific mission and damages relationships.

Ms. Porter and Dr. Scully said this is a distraction from the mission, despite the organization's best efforts to remain completely neutral.

Members said they have utmost respect for Dr. Graham and that his recusal from OTC projects should continue. Dr. Scully said this is outside the RMC mission if we judge any of these issues and that it is an Executive Committee or Governance matter.

**Mr. Leotti made a motion for further discussion of the lawsuit to go to the Governance Committee for guidance.**

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:04 PM.