



## **Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**

**November 18, 2025**

A meeting of the Board of Directors, Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 10:00 AM in the Discovery Room (in front of Children's Garden) at Bok Tower Gardens, 1151 Tower Blvd., Lake Wales, FL 33853. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 10:09 AM. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Board members present were Bill Bohde, Chris Gunter, George Hamner, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Ron Mahan, Trevor Murphy, Ajia Orth, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

President Morgan Porter noted that the minutes from the September 30, 2025 and October 31, 2025 Board meetings 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.

Ms. Porter welcomed everyone and greeted the special guests who were in attendance for the Discussion of Intellectual Property and Royalties. They were Yanni Logos, Co-founder and President of Soilcea; John Byatt, Licensing Officer prior to his retirement; Dr. Mingder Yang replaced him two years ago as Licensing Officer at UF Innovate; and John Beuttenmuller, Executive Director of Florida Foundation Seed Producers.

Mr. Dantzler noted that the CRDF Board and RMC had met previously to educate the committee and board members about what CRDF contracts required and presented to them the history of the agreements between CRDF and UF.

Mingder Yang outlined the first draft of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UF and CRDF, closing by saying that UF accepted the position that CRDF would receive 30% of the royalty if other funders did not receive royalties. Mr. Hamner reiterated that CRDF would receive the full 30% royalty. He clarified the need for transparency and disclosure.

Mingder Yang explained that going forward he would send an email notification to Mr. Dantzler for every invention disclosure he received to determine if CRDF funding was involved. They would coordinate on the back end before licensing to confirm CRDF funding and resolve any uncertainties with inventors as needed. They would establish a standing (every 6 months) meeting to review ongoing and new technologies and commercialization status, and ensure ongoing communication and transparency.

Relevant UF/IFAS and CRDF staff would schedule and conduct an in-person meeting in Gainesville to review documentation and finalize discussions on past and current IP/royalty issues, including a review of licensure agreements.

Ms. Porter echoed the need for better transparency and open communication, which should have happened with the meetings that were to occur every 6 months. She suggested that a group of CRDF staff and members go to the main campus to review the license agreement for Soilcea. It was mentioned that an NDA would need to be in place.

Yanni Lagos thanked CRDF for regulatory support at EPA and IR-4. He stated he worked with Dr. Harold Browning on the licensing agreement.

Ms. Shannon Shepp brought up chapter 601 and expressed a need to meet with Mingder Yang. She suggested a collaboration between CRDF, FDOC, and FCM.

Mr. Machata discussed Dr. Browning submitting a letter to the licensing office regarding the technology used to create canker tolerance/resistance. The process in place worked for the canker tree but did not work for the HLB CRISPR tree. He asked how the ball was dropped in regard to licensing of the HLB tree technology.

John Byatt acknowledged that proper procedures were not followed for the HLB CRISPR tree, and he accepted responsibility for the lack of notification. He then detailed the process of moving a genotype from creation to evaluation to commercialization within the UF licensing system.

Mr. Machata reminded everyone that UF had developed and commercially released many rootstocks and scions. CRDF was not notified about any of those genotype releases.

John Beuttenmuller said CRDF funding was not noted for all of the UF releases that were funneled through his department, but that he would work to identify funding support for those commercial releases. There would be a statement section added to the release paperwork for PIs to clearly indicate if there is background IP in CRDF proposals.

Mr. Bohde asked if the new research agreement had all the safety mechanisms in place to prevent a repeat of the notification failure.

John Byatt then described his first talks with Tom Turpen. He said they discussed how to effectively transfer technology to a commercial partner. He said the money aspect was secondary, and the money generated by licensing technology should help fund future research. He said there was not a lot of money generated by the licensing agreement.

Ms. Porter reminded everyone that every dollar counts. If money was due to CRDF, they needed it. She stated this was a priority for CRDF.

Mr. Machata stated that the issuance of an exclusive license could pose risk to the industry. "It is possible a monopoly could form that would have significant leverage on the industry. We can't let a licensee take over technology and make that technology unattainable."

John Byatt insisted that the license must be exclusive. There are a lot of upfront costs. UF has no influence on what a licensee might charge for the commercialized product.

Mr. Hamner asked if CRDF would be allowed to offer/suggest information at the licensing discussions with Mingder Yang.

The discussion ended with everyone having had ample time and opportunity to present their views and have their questions addressed.

**Executive Committee:** Did not meet.

**Finance and Audit Committee:** Treasurer Mahan presented his review of the October 31, 2025 financials. CRDF's Net Assets YTD were \$368,000; Actual YTD was \$1,200 vs. Budget Projection YTD of \$1,900; The Research Expenses were \$1.2 million vs. the budget of

\$1.4 million. The Citrus Marketing Order or box tax balance was right at \$380,000. Mr. Mahan moved to approve the financial summary as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

**Governance Committee:** Did not meet.

**Plant Improvement Committee:** Did not meet.

**Research Management Committee:** Mr. Machata noted that RMC met on Thursday, November 13, 2025, in Lake Alfred, FL.

The first project submitted under the Juvenility RFP was by Dr. Nian Wang, ‘Shorten the juvenility of non-transgenic Eds1 and Dmr6 edited citrus,’ a Preproposal Revision. It was a 3-yr project for \$451,332. Chairman Machata walked the board through the objectives, revisions and additions. He then put forth a motion to recommend inviting a full proposal from Dr. Wang with the addition of the suggested objective to test how loss of function of EDS1 and DMR6 could affect fruit quality and yield using mature plants. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata added that Dr. Wang's edits could be replicated with mature tissue transformation, resulting in a GMO scion, but utilizing GMO for evaluation purposes only will enable us to know if we have a commercially viable solution before the CRISPR edits are ready for execution.

Directed Research Proposals:

S. Santra 25-007 revised Proposal, ‘Novel trunk injection carriers for improving OTC and Zn distribution in HLB affected citrus trees.’ This is a 3-year project with a budget of \$286,647. RMC recommended funding with a few caveats. This project was for proof of concept and worked for the benefit of a private company that already had much of the underlying technology licensed. The committee recommended a funding negotiation with Trademark Nitrogen and a consultation with the DOC on Chapter 601. Mr. Machata put this forward as a motion. It was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

J. Qureshi 25-008 Proposal, ‘Determination of Bt resistance in Asian citrus psyllid *Diaphorina citri* Kuwayama.’ This is a 2-year project for \$196,136. Year 1 is going to be \$95,623. Mr. Machata put forth RMC’s suggestion as a motion to fund the first year since the second year would be dependent on success in developing a resistant ACP population. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

Off-Cycle Research Projects:

L. Diepenbrock, 25-009 Revised Proposal for year 5, ‘Hibiscus/lebbeck mealybug management in CUPS.’ This was a 3-year project that is specific to CUPS with a budget of \$843,286. RMC deemed that it was too costly and did not align with industry threats and did not recommend advancing the proposal. Mr. Dantzler could meet with Dr. Diepenbrock and see if there was a proposal that she could bring forward on that parasitoid specifically.

E. Triplett Preproposal, ‘Improved foliar phosphate approach for the reduction of HLB symptoms and increased yield.’ This \$45,000 project was rejected by RMC due to non-compliance issues,

uneconomical spray frequencies, and production costs, as well as the low likelihood of leading to a true solution for HLB infection.

M. Dutt Preproposal, 'Genomic Analysis of the Parson Brown sweet orange to identify novel CRISPR targets associated with enhanced HLB tolerance, higher brix and lower fruit drop relative to other early-season sweet orange cultivars.' The budget was \$90,000. Mr. Machata put forth a motion to recommend inviting a full proposal from Dr. Dutt as a starting point for genetic sequencing and analysis to identify CRISPR targets. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamner and passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata added that RMC suggested that a larger scale standardized genomic database could yield more significant results. They also discussed the potential benefits of mapping citrus trees on a large scale, with Dr. Chater's ongoing work noted. No formal action was taken but Chairman Machata and staff would review it with researchers.

Dr. Jim Graham gave a slide presentation on his recent trip to Brazil. This was a follow up to the April visit by the CRDF delegation. This was a trip with Larry Black, Peace River Packing, to tour Fundecitrus facilities to better understand the process for identifying genes for non-susceptibility in Emerocitrus/Microcitrus hybrids; visit trials of semi-dwarfing rootstocks; and observe area-wide management of ACP with Surround sprays. Dr. Eduardo Girardi, EMBRAPA, was working on semi-dwarfing rootstocks. Surround sprayed on these trees presented as gray-white to ACP causing the psyllids to fly over the trees.

**COO Report:** Mr. Dantzer stated that he would follow up with CTC and other relevant parties to determine if large-scale genetic mapping/sequencing of citrus varieties was being conducted, and if so, coordinate to standardize data collection and AI utilization for gene target selection.

**Partnership Updates:** Dr. Michael Rogers announced upcoming IFAS events including a field day at the Eagle Lake Block and a fruit display on December 17<sup>th</sup>. He noted that a meeting in Avon Park scheduled for December 10<sup>th</sup> was postponed to mid-January to avoid conflicts with Mutual's meetings, and he would make note and avoid scheduling future UF/IFAS events on dates that conflict with Florida Citrus Mutual and Commission meetings.

**New Business:** None.

**Public Comments:** Peter Chaires requested RSVPs for the Whitmore Farm open house and field day on December 5th and encouraged distribution of the invitation.

**Future Meeting:** The next Board of Directors meeting is TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 PM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.