



CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.
Plant Improvement Committee Meeting
Minutes

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

A meeting of the Plant Improvement Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Wednesday, July 2, 2025, via Zoom only. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 10:10 AM by Chair Joby Sherrod. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Committee members participating were Steve Callaham, Peter Chaires, Chris Gunter, Steven Hall, Wes Johnson, Trevor Murphy, Brandon Page, Erin Rosskopf, Joby Sherrod, Jim Snively, Sarah Spinosa, Pete Spyke, and Rosa Walsh.

Chair Joby Sherrod noted that the minutes of the April 15, 2025, Plant Improvement Committee meeting were included with the meeting materials. Ms. Spinosa made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Snively and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler shared that he and Mr. Sherrod had met with Wes Johnson, the principal investigator of the Coca-Cola project. Mr. Johnson would like to make a few changes to the two projects already approved, reducing the number of accessions to be field trialed from 90 to 68.

Beginning his slide presentation, Mr. Johnson showed that the first set of 60 were growing beautifully in the nursery and most were ready to plant. Some, but not all, of the rest had been budded. So, there was still time to change the list if so desired.

He then explained the scientific design of the trials, where they were to be located, which accessions were to be eliminated, which were to be kept, and the difference in cost because of the changes.

Mr. Weston then answered questions on criteria used to make his recommendations.

Dr. Rosskopf questioned whether the trees would be treated with OTC or managed without. Mr. Weston had not planned on injecting them but was open to both options. Mr. Spyke noted and Dr. Rosskopf agreed that it would be better to do without the injections to see how they would do on their own. Mr. Snively was in favor of having both injected and non-injected, which was the sentiment of the committee.

Dr. Futch questioned if the scions going to Georgia would be early maturing varieties to avoid any kind of freeze damage to the fruit. Mr. Johnson confirmed that 30 accessions would be, which included 12 sweet orange, 12 fresh, and then something in the middle that could go either way. Everything was selected to be optimally mature between October and December.

The plan is to get Lake Alfred planted in the next 6 weeks. Citra and Fort Pierce could wait until spring depending on the site preparation needed.

Mr. Spyke made a motion to recommend the proposed changes to the board. The motion was seconded by Dr. Rosskopf and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler noted that there were three plant improvement projects pending, one involving conventional plant breeding. The PIC reviewed this project by Drs. Dutt, Grosser, and Chater that would graft Dr. Grosser's top 6 scions onto his top 6 rootstocks. One of the things debated was whether USDA germplasm needed to be part of the project, and that concern was also voiced by RMC. So the project went to Dr. Bowman for his input, and 3 USDA scions were added. It went back to RMC, but committee members were still concerned about the lack of data supporting the nominations, a concern expressed by PIC committee members, too.

So, with the concurrence of the PIs, Mr. Dantzler forwarded that project to HLB Mac for its consideration.. They have funds available, and committee members are familiar with Dr. Grosser's work since it has been in an HLB trial in the past. There was also a discussion that some of the nominations could be able to be submitted to CRAFT. Mr. Hall stated that CRAFT is considering including germplasm that has not been released to the public. They met before the budget was finalized, and the CRAFT board would be meeting again in late July to finalize the program rules.

The other two projects involved transgenic breeding; one by Dr. Messina, Director of the Crop Transformation Center; and the other by Dr. Dutt. Mr. Dantzler explained the desires of RMC and the board for these projects. Mr. Dantzler said he expected some version of a combined project coming back to CRDF committees for review.

Mr. Dantzler then explained that CRDF had been in touch with Dr. Nian Wang regarding his new top gene targets. Mr. McCoy asked which variety had been edited, to which Mr. Dantzler responded a Hamlin and Valencia. One of the genes is EDS1 and the other DMR6. However, the timeline to commercialization is probably 5 to 8 years because there are not many plants and they have yet to be validated in the field.

He next reported on Soilcea's transgenic rootstock with conventional scions grafted onto it, which seems to be doing well. Mr. McCoy inquired as to whether the Soilcea rootstock, when and if approved by EPA, would be considered a commercially available variety for CRAFT consideration. Mr. Hall confirmed that it would have commercial availability after release through DPI.

With no Other Business and no Public Comments, the meeting was adjourned at 10:53 AM.

Minutes submitted by Barbara Thompson.