

# In the Loop

“Keeping You Informed About the Research Process”



## **Casting the Big Net and Catching Many Proposals**

As we all hoped big dollars brought lots of interested scientists to the greening/canker challenge. The request for proposals ended July 14 and the results are impressive. Dr. Tom Turpen of Technology Innovation Group (TIG), the management firm hired by the Florida Citrus Production Research Advisory Council (FCPRAC) provides the following comments after processing the pre proposals.

“Florida citrus growers have raised awareness of the greening crisis in the international research community by committing over \$20M to finding practical disease solutions and partnering with the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies for independent technical and merit review of research proposals. In response to the request for proposals released in June, the NRC has received 236 pre proposals involving researchers from 19 states and 13 foreign countries. The competition for awards is over-subscribed with at least \$35M requested in the projected first-year budgets targeting Greening and another \$2.4M requested for research on Canker and other emerging diseases of citrus. Tom Turpen, Program Manager for FCPRAC says, "This is the best supported and most effective agricultural research and private business partnership in the country. The response to the Florida Citrus Advanced Technology Program is outstanding in quality and breadth of innovation." Peter McClure, FCPRAC Chair said, “The Florida Citrus Industry got serious about fighting the HLB war when the Florida Citrus Commission made the hard decision to fully fund HLB research in order to save the industry. These funds, combined with the National Academies of Sciences’ expertise and with the professional research program management provided by Technology Innovation Group has produced the intended initial results. We now have a world class research effort under way to provide HLB management solutions to Florida Citrus Growers. We have received 236 high quality research pre-proposals to choose from. That is huge! The NRC and TIG will choose which pre-proposals will advance to full proposals. The full proposals will be then be reviewed and ranked by the NRC and sent to the FCPRAC Box Tax Council for approval. By December we will be awarding the next round of research funding. Overwhelming industry support is paying off on the research front. Surviving HLB is still an uphill battle, but now we have a fighting chance to whip this thing!”

The tremendous response is mostly good news with a little bad news. The NRC now must decide how to process the large number of pre proposals. Currently Dr. Turpen is assisting with

## In the Loop

the process. Hopefully some may be combined into a broader project. There may be several that are similar and weaker ones can be eliminated. In other cases the chance for success may be extremely low or the proposed work has already been done. The goal over the next few weeks is to determine which pre proposals will go forward. Those that make the cut will be asked to provide a more detailed proposal that will be peer reviewed by NRC. The original thought was there would be 4 review panels that would process approximately 20 to 25 proposals each. With the large number of proposals some changes will have to be considered. Will additional panels be established? We will have to see how NRC handles this response.

Hopefully Dr. Turpen will provide more details as his team processes the 236 pre proposals. This is a significant task!

### **More Good News**

The 2008 Farm Bill provides major changes that will positively impact all specialty crop producers, which includes citrus growers. One provision of the new Farm Bill deals with research funding. For 2008 \$28.4 million is available under the Specialty Crop Research Initiative. Requests must be submitted by August 14, 2008. Strong consideration will be given to those proposals that are “inter”, as in interdisciplinary, interagency, interstate. Florida is developing several citrus proposals, that meet several of the above “inter” requirements as they involve UF/IFAS as lead agency with USDA-ARS Ft. Pierce as well as Texas A&M, Arizona State and University of California (Riverside and Davis) partners. One features Greening and Advanced Production Systems with numerous scientists involved. The last requirement for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative is they must have a 50/50 cost share and the matching dollars cannot be other federal funds. This last criteria puts the Florida citrus industry in an excellent position as there are considerable grower dollars pledged to research. A small group of stakeholders; FCPRAC, FDACS, FCM, FCIRCC and FDOC will review the Florida citrus proposals and recommend support of one or two. The support will be in the form of letters to accompany the application and to the congressional delegation asking for their support. It is likely one proposal will be for \$6 million over 4 years. If successful the federal dollars will strengthen the research work to find solutions to greening and canker. The federal program will allow the FCPRAC to shift dollars to fund additional projects from the list of 236. Florida citrus is fortunate to have a strong network in place. Growers through Florida Citrus Mutual, Florida Citrus Commission and the Florida Citrus Production Research Advisory Council along with packers, processors, and harvesters input through the Florida Citrus Industry Research Coordinating Council have stepped up with dollars and time to support the excellent research agencies (UF/IFAS, FDOC and USDA-ARS Ft. Pierce and Winter Haven). In addition the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have made significant contributions as well.

# In the Loop

Certainly a maximum effort is being made to solve the greening and canker challenge and a model is being established to deal with future problems as well.

## **Keeping Up With it All**

The last issue of In the Loop stated “In response to Industry requests for increased professional management capability to handle a project this large, the FCPRAC hired Dr. Tom Turpen from Technology Innovation Group (TIG) to be the Program Manager. Dr. Turpen will work directly with the NAS on the request and review of proposals. Dr. Turpen will also be working directly with research institutions, individual researchers, and private biotech companies in order to tailor research proposals toward finding short term solutions for greening and canker. He will be working to compress the time it takes to go from the lab to the grove by helping the industry to rapidly commercialize research results so that growers can hook the results up to a tractor and drag it through the groves. Dr. Turpen's focus will be to ensure that research is aimed at protecting our current trees and crops until the time that long term research results like genetic engineering become available.”

It should be noted that not only is Dr. Turpen working with FCPRAC, his entire company TIG is involved. There has been some misinformation regarding TIG and Dr. Turpen. Please note both are, and will continue to provide key input for the entire process. Future issues of In the Loop will outline other activities and input from TIG.

John Jackson  
FCIRCC – Director  
July 28, 2008