

# In the Loop

“Keeping You Informed About the Research Process”

Spring 2009



**Step 2 – FCPRAC Approves Another 21 Proposals**

**FCIRCC Annual Report – Recommendations Reviewed**

**Citrus Research and Development, Inc. the DSO is in place**

**Labels in Place for Low Volume Mist Applications**

## **The Florida Citrus Production Research Advisory Council**

(FCPRAC) met on March 13 and recommended funding the final 21 proposals. The list was posted on FCPRAC web site in the information forum under Budget Revisions FCATP08, Discussion Proposals on Mar. 18th. The location is <http://www.ecostat.info/cgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi> Those recommended for the second round included several which are essential for research operations and provide infrastructure established over the past several years. The funded projects will support two field entomologists, the genetic transmission lab (they insert genes into plants!), field sites for testing genetically engineered plants, as well as the PCR labs (Southern Gardens and SW Florida REC). One proposal was an economic project that will allow for cost benefit information from research proposals. The Florida Citrus Commission approved \$2.5 M to cover these 21 proposals with some left to be used for unexpected needs.

All of the original 83 proposals recommended by the National Academy of Science have been processed. The FDOC has executed 70 contracts and the FDACS is handling the other 13. The numbers are interesting - \$8.1 M (59%) went to IFAS, \$2.4 M (18%) to USDA, \$1.8 M (14%) to private or foreign labs and \$1.2 M to other US universities. Host-Pathogens interactions (22%) and plant transformation (25%) were the areas receiving the largest portion of the \$13.6 M awarded in the first round. Almost all of the projects are multi year. Therefore it will be necessary to find \$14 M to \$15M next year to keep the research process moving forward. This may be difficult with 70 cent pound solids!

Florida Citrus Mutual is spearheading an ambitious initiative to obtain federal funding to help the grower in several areas. If successful, some of the research funding needed next year may very well come from USDA APHIS's Citrus Health and Response Plan (CHRP) for focused technical research projects, as well as the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and USDA's Cooperative State Research, Extension, and Education Service (CSREES) for applied research projects on the psyllid and HLB. In addition, the 2008 Farm Bill has \$48 M available for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) this year. A competitive process is under way to award those research grants. Plus, \$2.5 M in federal research money is going to FDACS for block grants in the current round of that program (also competitive for researchers). This is quite a complex picture for research dollars.

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**The Florida Citrus Industry Research Coordinating Council (FCIRCC) has released its 2008 report.** A long and short version can be found at our web site <http://www.fcircc.org>. Several presentations have been given around the state outlining the gaps/needs and recommendations from the report. Several issues are very important. The FCIRCC is committed to a sustainable long term citrus research program. The foundation for quality research is a reliable source of funds. Over the last three years grower support for research has increased astronomically with the industry providing 45% of the dollars last year and more than likely at least 60% for this year. Some big decisions will need to be made in the near future relative to how citrus research will be funded. The production box tax sunsets in 2010 and growers must decide if the assessment will remain, and at what level. It is obvious that one penny a box will provide only a small fraction of what is needed. Growers must decide how to best invest their dollars and this decision must be made soon! Ten cents a box will generate \$10 M to \$15M which seems to be the minimum needed based on the situation today. Faced with greening and canker, this is not the time to back off research.

Aside from the huge issue of long term funding for research, there are other gaps to be bridged and needs to be addressed. The citrus genome must be sequenced, abscission chemical registered, mechanical harvesting efficiency improved, and work in the post harvest area expanded. It is also necessary to find a better way to manage the research process in order to obtain tools growers can use in the field. These are certainly challenging times for citrus research; tremendous needs and uncertain funding.

**The need to better manage the large amount of grower dollars available for research** has led to the establishment of a University of Florida DSO (Direct Service Organization). The UF board of trustees officially approved the Citrus Research and Development Foundation on March 17, 2009. Florida Citrus Mutual and the Florida Citrus Commission have recommended five (5) board members each to join two from UF and one from FDACS. The entity will begin to function very soon. The Citrus Research and Development Foundation will develop research proposals, establish review panels, negotiate intellectual property rights, manage contracts, partner to develop products (technology transfer), deal with regulatory issues, etc. To accomplish this they will hire staff, secure consultants, and utilize expertise that exists within the industry and scientific community. Hopefully the Citrus Research and Development Foundation can be a more efficient vehicle to manage the entire citrus research process from funding to technology transfer. This is uncharted water for the citrus industry, but other DSOs such as the Florida Athletic Association manage extremely large ventures very successfully! Solving greening would be a “national championship” for the citrus grower!

**For the past three months a strong effort has been made to obtain 24 (c) labels to allow low volume mist applications for psyllid control.** Traditionally label changes are a relatively slow process requiring input from several state agencies and EPA approval. Currently Valent, Dow, FMC and Chemtura have (or will very soon) submitted packages to add low volume mist

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applications for their products. The Florida Department of Agriculture has responded quickly and is doing all they can to move the process forward. The IR-4 program has been involved and EPA is aware of the critical nature psyllids have in greening. Rulings by FDACS have provided assurance that dimethote, Sevin and oil can be applied in low volume (as low as 2 gallons per acre). By June 1 there should be 24(c) labels in place for Danitol, Mustang, Delegate and Micromite. This will allow growers to choose from seven products so they can vary chemistries to minimize resistance. Lastly, it should be noted that citrus growers are using low volume mist applications, not ultra low volume fogging. Mosquito controllers fog as they want suspended particles in the air so when the target insect flies it will come in contact with the spray. Citrus growers use low volume mist applications to deposit the pesticide on the tree/psyllid and thus kill by contact. Growers deliver pesticide to the pest; they do not rely on the psyllid flying into a cloud of pesticide! This is an important distinction. Mosquito control wants drift, citrus growers want penetration. End of semantics; let's try to remember we are using low volume mist applications to manage psyllids.

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