

UF/IFAS at Citrus Expo

By Jack Payne

If you were at the Citrus Expo in August, you heard it from a grower on the podium: If citrus canker is a common cold, HLB is full-blown AIDS.

The analogy to describe the problem is apt. The same analogy applies to the solution. Just as there's no cure for AIDS yet, there's none for HLB.



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But 30 years after the emergence of the human disease, we've found that through a combination of therapies individuals can manage the disease and enjoy a high quality of life.

And about a decade into the HLB epidemic, we're finding that a combination of grove management tactics can keep trees producing good fruit while IFAS continues the search for a long-term solution.

IFAS dispatched what might as well be called its citrus strike force team to North Fort Myers. If you weren't there, the great thing is that these folks are available to you year round. A few highlights from the Expo:

• **Research:** From thermotherapy to aerial monitoring to root biology, we sent a parade of experts to the seminar podium to give you an update on what we're learning about strategies to

combat citrus greening.

We know that what we find in one grove may not apply universally, so we hope we can count on your continued cooperation in hosting our field research on some of your acreage. Not only does it help confirm (or disprove) that a particular approach will work on your land, but we know that seeing is believing, and it's a powerful way for you to draw your own conclusions about IFAS research.

• **Extension:** IFAS staffed an Extension showroom in the very heart of the exhibit hall in the Lee Civic Center. Our area featured wall exhibits and brochures on weeds, canker, citrus black spot, heat therapy, and, of course, HLB. We also distributed field identification pocket guides to HLB and citrus canker.

• **Funding:** Harold Browning of Citrus Research and Development Foundation, a UF/IFAS-created organization to support the industry, gave you the rundown on the \$21 million USDA Multi-Agency Coordination funding dedicated to delivering shovel-ready solutions to citrus greening in California, Texas and Florida. This funding is the companion to the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crop Research Initiation funding dedicated to citrus disease research. Browning will be among the Florida agriculture leaders

who will be working to assure a fair share of that money funds research most relevant to Florida. Californians are most interested in early detection, for example, while Florida needs investigation into how to respond to widespread infection. Browning will continue to update you on the pages of this magazine each month and serves on the MAC group, evaluating HLB projects with an emphasis on solutions that are ready for field trials.

The money is a huge help to the citrus industry and a credit to Florida agriculture leaders who successfully communicated the urgency to our lawmakers. But we can't rest on our laurels. The money is released in \$25 million annual increments, and Congress has to act every year to appropriate the funding to continue the program. We need you to heed the calls from your association leaders to make your voice heard in Washington.


• **The return of Calvin Arnold:** You saw a familiar face on the podium as emcee. Arnold is back as director of the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee. He had led the center for 10 years until we lost him to USDA for a




Arnold

time. We are thrilled to have welcomed him back into the fold at IFAS in March. He's a terrific scientist and a skilled manager who knows how to get the most out of his people. And a key factor in our strong desire to bring him back to IFAS was that we knew he's someone you know and trust. His return is a symbol of our commitment to serving the citrus industry.

Jack Payne is senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources at the University of Florida. 🍊





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