



Staffing up on citrus scientists

By Jack Payne, jackpayne@ufl.edu, @JackPayneIFAS

We've already got just about all hands on deck at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) working on HLB.

So to increase our efforts, we're adding more hands. Actually, we're adding more minds. Our success in the legislature this year is about to become your success.

We told lawmakers and their budgeteers that after years of cutbacks, we needed to start building our faculty back up, and citrus greening was one of the reasons. We can't move toward solutions fast enough in 2015 with recession-level staffing.

UF/IFAS will be dispatching dozens of new scientists across the state to bolster many commodities and communities. Citrus, of course, will

be a focus area, especially for some of the hires we have planned for the Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) in Lake Alfred, the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) in Immokalee and the Indian River Research and Education Center (IRREC) in Fort Pierce.

POSITIONS TO BE FILLED

Let's start at Lake Alfred. CREC Director Michael Rogers is looking for a tree physiologist. He needs that expertise to develop science-based, integrated pest management programs for citrus. The new scientist will develop a tree fruit physiology program that promotes collaboration among research and Extension faculty in several of UF/IFAS's 13 research and education centers. The CREC scientist will focus on pathogen infection, pest populations, tree stress, nutrition and irrigation.

We're also bringing on three replacement hires at CREC. Rogers is finely attuned to the needs of the industry, so to address emerging disease issues, he's replacing a vacant pathologist position with a citrus virologist. A slot that was historically

Continued on page 6

Message to Citrus Industry Readers



We appreciate hearing from some of you about our September issue cover, right as we were preparing to go to print with this month's issue. We realize we ruffled some feathers with the cover graphic, and for that we sincerely apologize.

Regardless of the artwork we chose for the September cover to bring attention to the article inside, we believe the authors did a good job in explaining the science of GMOs and we appreciate them for doing so in the pages of this magazine. However, since only one of the comments we received recognized the quality of the article itself, we've decided to ask some key agriculture industry representatives to work with us to explore this topic further, including perhaps how emotions play into this debate on both sides of the issue, as agriculture strives to find more effective ways to be heard and understood by the consumer masses.

Please rest assured that after decades of reporting on important citrus and other agriculture news issues, including topics that can be sometimes tough to tackle in a way to please everyone, I and other members of our team remain firmly in the corner of growers and industry when it comes to issues of scientific facts versus fiction. That philosophy is not limited just to this topic of GMOs, either.

This magazine does not go to the mainstream; it goes to primarily growers and the citrus-related agriculture community. While we now clearly realize our September cover art misrepresented the technology, maybe this instance can be used as the start of a more productive conversation within our industry itself. It is our desire to help growers and others in our industry to be better prepared to be part of the solution in explaining this issue to their neighbors and to the public in the future.

Sincerely,
Gary Cooper
Founder and President
AgNet Media

Continued from page 4

focused on water use and freeze protection will be filled by a water and nutrient specialist who can work on managing the health of trees with HLB. Rogers will also hire an entomologist to fill the job he vacated when I promoted him to lead CREC.

In Immokalee, SWFREC Director Calvin Arnold is hiring a citrus pathologist, a plant physiologist and a soil microbiologist, all of whom will spend a portion of their time on citrus issues.

And in Fort Pierce, IRREC Director Peter Stoffella is hiring an entomologist who will focus on the psyllid. IRREC hasn't had an entomologist working on citrus for about a decade, so this fills a longstanding need. It will also allow IRREC to strengthen its collaboration with scientists in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service lab that's within walking distance of where the new entomologist will be working.

KUDOS TO OUR ADVOCATES

We worked hard for you this year. We succeeded because you worked hard for us. Special thanks to people like Mike Minton and Travis Murphy in the Fort Pierce area and Ron Hamel and Aaron Troyer in Southwest Florida for helping us make the case for beefing up the IFAS research team. Of course, we're indebted to Mike Sparks, too, for his consistent advocacy for research.

When it comes to defeating an existential threat to citrus like HLB, we need to invest as much as we can in solutions. We can always use more scientists to research unexplored areas, to accelerate existing projects and to bring a fresh perspective to what is now a decade-old crisis.

CITRUS: A KEY CONCERN

While UF/IFAS is not the only organization doing Florida citrus research, as the land-grant university, our work is focused on public service. One reason we're an attractive investment is that we've been doing citrus research for such a long time. We're here to stay, just like we believe the citrus industry is.

You can expect to read each month in *Citrus Industry* magazine about the progress resulting from our brain gain. You'll have the chance to meet the researchers at field days and maybe even in your groves.

When I asked my deans, department heads and research center directors for proposals for investing the new state money we secured, I of course received pitches for projects that far exceed my capacity to pay for them.

Many worthy projects and positions didn't make the cut. Anything I saw with the word "citrus" in it, though, immediately got a second look.

I had to make some very tough calls, but the fight against HLB was a priority in my plan for how to best invest our new resources. It will remain so until we find a path forward for growers in the HLB era. 🍊

Jack Payne is the University of Florida's senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources and head of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.



A WORLD OF GROWING IDEAS

Tree Wraps Deer Nets Budding Tape Hand Tools
 Picking Bags pH Testers Bug Lenses Shade Cloth
 Ground Cover & Staples Row Cover Tensiometers
 Field Boxes Safety Supplies Testing Equipment
 Harvesting Supplies Flagging Tape Nursery Supplies

FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED LOCAL SERVICE & DELIVERY
 Toll Free 1-800-635-3621 full catalog @ FROSTPROOF.COM



Eric Nething (813) 477-4023
 eric@holmbergfarms.com

Doug Holmberg (813) 335-8800
 dougsipad@gmail.com

Rootstocks Available:		Available Now:	
Sour orange	x639	Ruby Red/Sour	7,000
Swingle	us802	Hamlin/Sour	1,500
Carrizo	us812	Valencia/Sour	1,500
Cleo	us897, us942	Robles/Sour	500
		Sunburst/Sour	500
		Hamlin/Carrizo	500
		Valencia/Carrizo	5,000
		Navel/Carrizo	1,000
		Lee/Carrizo	500
		Hamlin/SWG	8,000
		Valencia/SWG	15,000

13430 Hobson Simmons Rd., Lithia, FL 33547