



# Your voice, your science

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**A**s the legislative session winds down, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is gearing up. We're in the process of hiring seven entomologists and nematologists with the resources the Florida Legislature granted us in the 2015 session. This is happening in part because the Florida citrus industry helped us make the case for it in Tallahassee.

## ACCOMPLISHING MORE TOGETHER

Not only that, but we're organizing our new hires into a statewide integrated pest management team. Hiring in blocks like this allows us to increase the impact of the newcomers by building collaboration right into their job descriptions. We accomplish more together than separately in so many things, and science is no exception.

One of the entomologists will be assigned to work specifically on citrus from our Fort Pierce center. But with newly authorized research funding for HLB in the 2014 federal Farm Bill and in last year's state budget, it's likely that even some entomologists we bring on without a specific HLB assignment will pursue that funding. That will multiply the efforts to find solutions. Even expansions of IFAS science efforts that aren't labeled HLB initiatives can greatly benefit the citrus industry.

## RESPONDING TO THE CALL

So please respond to the call when citrus commodity group leaders ask you to advocate for the IFAS budget. It only makes sense to seek public money when you're already investing your own dollars in research through the box tax.

Public money spent on citrus research has a public benefit as it protects and improves the state's economy. But we can't take for granted that legislators know that as they face votes on hundreds of bills on hundreds of subjects.

I don't need to tell you that time is of the essence for the citrus industry. We can't wait a few more years to bring on the increased expertise that will fuel efforts to find HLB solutions. The time is now. And there are only a few days left in the 2016 session. So please watch your inboxes and your mailboxes for messages from your leaders — and read those messages!

We know, for example, that Florida Citrus Mutual has formally supported our request to the Florida Legislature for \$3.5 million for what's known as a workload increase. In plain English, that's hiring more scientists.

It's a smaller request than last year's, but no less important.

## WANTED: RESEARCHERS AND RESOURCES

Meanwhile, I'm authorizing replacements for two citrus research stars we've lost in the past year. Not only are we now seeking candidates to succeed Marjorie Hoy, an eminent scholar based in Gainesville who has retired, but we've written duties that directly relate to HLB solutions right into the job description. We're also looking for someone to fill the spot vacated by Michael Rogers when I tapped him last year to lead the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred.

The point is, we need to marshal resources wherever we can find them. We come at the funding challenge from multiple angles: the Citrus Research and Development Foundation box tax, private donations, endowments, existing IFAS funds, federal funding and the state budget.

We take the same multiple-angle approach to HLB, of course — thermal therapy, bactericides, citrus health management areas, new varieties that appear to be increasingly tolerant of the disease, even a genetically modified tree.

We want to make that list longer and the items on it even more effective in keeping you in business and Florida orange juice on the nation's breakfast tables.

To fund a solution, legislators first need to understand the problem. That's where you come in. By letting policy-makers know what it means to be a grower in the age of HLB, you can help them prioritize among the myriad potential beneficial uses of state dollars.

We at IFAS do the science. Your voice is key to giving us the opportunity to do that science. 🍊

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