



Celebrating 100 years of CREC

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

The language in Chapter 7379 of the 1917 Laws of Florida seems quaint by today's standards in its description of the challenges facing the citrus industry.

"Whereas, There is annually a loss of many thousands of dollars to said industry from attacks of insect pests, fungous diseases, and other causes not well understood; and Whereas, Further and more detailed research is necessary concerning the nature of such causes before effective methods can be devised for combatting them..."

Thousands of dollars? That's one grove today. On the other hand, the preamble of that law, dated June 4, 1917, establishing "a Branch Experiment Station, in or near Winter Haven, Polk County..." is timeless in its call for science in the service of industry.

I've been telling the story of the Citrus Research and Education Center's (CREC) 100th anniversary bit by bit in this space all year, but in this month's issue, you get a more complete account in the pages that follow.

INDUSTRY RESILIENCY

It's the story of how generations of growers and a succession of University of Florida scientists have fought off threats to citrus. This history of resilience is the long view that helps us put the next gloomy production forecast in perspective.

Many years before we created the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, our researchers in Lake Alfred dedicated themselves to finding solutions for a single commodity. That science supported an industry that

has inspired the utopian scenes on crate labels, the naming of college football's second-oldest bowl game, the look of the state's license plates, the names on the state map, and the marketing of Florida worldwide as a destination where you can pick your health right off the trees.

Of course, this science has also made it possible for tens of thousands of Floridians to make a living off growing grapefruit, tangerines, oranges and other citrus.

CONTINUED COOPERATION

The 100th anniversary of CREC is important because it celebrates a partnership. It sets the stage for our future cooperation against increasingly complex challenges. I'm not just talking about the psyllid, but globalization, changing consumer tastes and attitudes, and the labor market.

Scientists and producers have faced big challenges before, such as canker and spreading decline. We're still in business at CREC because you're still in business in the groves and packinghouses. We're committed to continuing to provide solutions. We look forward to another 100 years of scientific breakthroughs in the labs and greenhouses, delivered to your groves and taught to the next several generations of citrus experts.

For every story of past leaders such as Walt Kender in these pages, there's a Michael Rogers writing the next story today. For every Ivan Stewart solving the yellow spot crisis in the 1950s, there's a Nian Wang today on the cutting edge of agricultural biotechnology who could completely change the way we approach breeding and disease resistance.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the growers who put up the \$10,000 the Florida Legislature demanded in 1917 as a condition for creating the Citrus Research and Education Center. One hundred years later, we remain grateful that we have such great partners who not only help us identify the challenges, but contribute funding, time, toil and acreage to the search for solutions.

Please join us at CREC on Nov. 29 for its centennial celebration (see sidebar for details). You'll come away with a better sense of how important our partnership is. I also believe that the more you learn about the ways we're attacking challenges from virtually every conceivable scientific angle, the more optimism you'll have that the breakthroughs will keep coming and your grandkids will inherit a healthy grove. 🍊

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

You're invited

WHAT: Citrus Research and Education Center 100th Anniversary Celebration

WHEN: Wednesday, November 29, 2017

9:00 a.m. Registration

9:30–11:30 a.m. Program featuring University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences faculty

11:30 a.m. Lunch

12:30–3:30 p.m. Grove visits, research demonstrations, experimental grove tours

WHERE: Ben Hill Griffin Jr. Citrus Hall, Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred

RSVP: <https://crec100years.eventbrite.com>

