



# Protecting a way of life

By Scott Angle, [jangle@ufl.edu](mailto:jangle@ufl.edu)

**W**hen I visited the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) last year for a review of research, I had but one request for my two-day itinerary: to hear from citrus growers. And I'm so glad I did. In my previous job leading U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) external research arm, growers helped me learn more about citrus, HLB and needs of the industry.

I'm grateful to Larry Black, Tom

Mitchell and Vic Story for participating in my visit to Gainesville and helping me more thoroughly understand these issues.

Little did I know then that just 15 months later I would be back in Florida leading the team working on solutions — not just as a funder following up on projects! Today, I want the exact same thing I wanted as director of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) — for grant money to be spent the best way possible to achieve the best solutions.

## A PERSONAL PLIGHT

I keenly know and *feel* the sense of urgency of those in the industry. I understand that it's your past, present and future that is on the line, and I pledge to do all that I can to support the industry. Nothing in Florida agriculture is more iconic than citrus.

Growing citrus is more than just a business for many of you. When I met Jim Snively in Washington, D.C., in December, he was there as a leading industry representative at a USDA citrus disease subcommittee meeting. I also understand that as it is for so many industry leaders, citrus is in his blood, that his great grandfather Pop John was a key player who helped secure funding in 1917 to establish what became the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center.

The fight against HLB is personal for every one of you, and for my family, too. My father-in-law is an 84-year-old citrus grower in California. I love to visit his grove, which he still works in every day, where we bounce down rutted roads in his pickup truck. I can't take that ride without telling him I'm

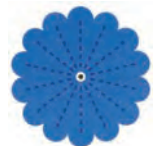
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**During an April 2019 University of Florida visit, Scott Angle met citrus grower Vic Story.**

doing everything I can to prevent HLB from taking his trees — and meaning it.

### **BUILDING A PRESERVATION PACKAGE**

Mike Sparks, who was among my first visitors at NIFA in D.C., has generously shared his deep expertise with me. When it looked as if our flight schedules would leave no time to meet, I found a window of time and we agreed to an early breakfast at his hotel on my way to the airport.

We covered the facts and the data. We also had an interesting discussion about the potential of applying principles from human medicine to HLB science. It was speculation, of course, but it's that kind of out-of-the-box thinking that I want to promote among the UF/IFAS research corps as they look for new angles of attack.

UF/IFAS has literally the best HLB and citrus researchers in the world. They have made progress, but more is needed. We have a powerful alliance of

the state, federal government, university and industry that have joined together to find solutions to the devastation.

I am honored to lead UF/IFAS, which is leading the way in the fight against HLB. In 2018, I read an early copy of the National Academies consensus study report on citrus greening research and was amazed by the complexity of the problem. It was abundantly and immediately clear that there would be no single silver bullet for a cure. Hard work by diverse scientists is needed to build a package for preservation of the industry. Although new to Florida, I am acutely aware that time is not on our side. More progress is needed sooner, not later.

UF/IFAS is a powerful resource both in terms of intellectual capacity and infrastructure. Call upon us anytime and anywhere. Our job and the reason we wake and work each day is to support you and others leading one of the state's largest and most significant industries. 🍊

*Scott Angle is the University of Florida's vice president for agriculture and natural resources and leader of UF/IFAS.*



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