



Doing more to address citrus needs

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I'm making a series of decisions this fall to do more to address citrus industry needs, and I want you to know why I'm doing this.

You might call this the Angle Citrus Manifesto. It's my update to you on my thinking. It's based on conversations I've had with you in groves, in board rooms, at industry events and on Zoom, my cell phone and my inbox. Here's what you can expect from me this fall:

We will expand our citrus breeding efforts. I intend to bring a citrus horticulturalist to Lake Alfred to contribute to new variety development. I will not approve this hire unless I'm convinced that this scientist is focused

on the needs of the industry. This person should be doing late-stage research to get new fruit varieties across the finish line and available to plant in your groves. I have approved another position to follow this one. That position will hold the title of Graves Brothers Professorship to encourage a senior expert on breeding to help lead the program.

We will update our nutrient recommendations. It was never our intention to have our guidelines turn into regulations, but it seems that's where we are. So, I am aggressively seeking resources to expand and accelerate our work on citrus best management practices. I

know we especially need to update our phosphorus application recommendations pronto, and we will share our advances with you through the Citrus Production Guide, our citrus research website and through the Extension state specialists and citrus agents who serve you. Much of this work will be done on your farms.

I will continue to emphasize to my team that our research needs to aim toward solutions that deliver direct benefits to production agriculture.

While I do not think for a minute that our scientists are ivory tower academics, I will make it clear that even as we research water quality, environmental protection and ecosystems services, we must never lose sight that we're in this to keep citrus profitable. My message to them is my message to you: If production agriculture goes out of business, that is terrible for the environment. We are much better off keeping an existing citrus grove than replacing it with a parking lot.

I will need your help. When I ask for funding, I need the backing of growers, processors and allied industry representatives to make the case based on the benefits we anticipate from the proposed research. Please pay close attention to what your association leaders say about the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) budget and how you can play a role in educating public policy makers about the importance of citrus research.

To recap, I'm assembling an expanded team, reemphasizing our focus on delivering solutions and moving with urgency on nutrient recommendations.

I believe in accountability. I recently told the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, which funds a great deal of our research, that if they're not getting their money's worth out of us, hold onto it.

That won't happen. I am all in to support the citrus industry. We have the best citrus science team in the world. We know who our customers are, and we listen. 🍊

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