Citrus Research Trust Fund Moving Forward in the Senate

A bill to create the Citrus Research Trust Fund has cleared a significant hurdle and U.S. Senator Bill Nelson says he will work hard to get it through the full Senate in the coming months.

In late July, the Senate Finance Committee approved the measure - the Citrus Disease Research and Development Trust Fund Act - to establish a federal disease research program combating citrus greening and other invasive pests and diseases. The trust fund is funded through a portion of the tariff on imported citrus products. It could generate up to $30 million per year for citrus research.

Nelson’s bill was passed as part of a package that also includes trust fund programs for the U.S. wool and cotton industries. The bill now awaits consideration by the full Senate.

“Senate Finance Committee approval of the Citrus Trust Fund bill represents a major step forward however, it’s only one step and there’s still more work to be done,” said Michael W. Sparks, executive VP/CEO of Florida Citrus Mutual. “There is going to be a lot of action on this measure in both the Senate and the House as Congress reconvenes from summer break and ultimately the lame duck session at the end of the year.”

“We will continue to work closely with Senator Nelson and his staff, along with the rest of the U.S. citrus industry, as we seek enactment of the legislation, and will continue to keep you apprised of developments.”

The Finance Committee’s approval of the trust fund bill follows the creation last summer of a pilot program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture that dedicates $11 million in federal funding to citrus greening research. The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) has already received $2 million from the program. The balance will be directed by a grower stakeholder committee where Florida has four of the seven board seats.

Mutual and FNGLA Conduct Nursery Survey

Florida Citrus Mutual and the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) have partnered to survey citrus growers on the current state of the nursery market.

The supply of and demand for citrus nursery trees has been an issue in recent years as growers decide whether to replant. Replanting is the lifeblood of our industry and Mutual knows it is very important for everyone - growers, nurserymen, handlers and processors - to have good data so they can make informed business decisions.

More than 110 growers answered the confidential survey which asked questions about availability, varieties and contracts. Mutual and FNGLA are now compiling the results and once competed a report will be distributed to the industry.

Industry Continues to Work with Governor

The Florida citrus industry continues to discuss with Governor Rick Scott the prospect of a significant state investment in HLB research.

Mutual has collaborated with the Florida Department of Citrus, the Citrus Research and Development Foundation and the Indian River Citrus League over the past month to create a document on the benefits of investing in citrus research.

Several meetings with high level staff in the Governor’s Office have been extremely positive. Once the request is formalized Mutual will report the results to the industry and seek input.

The goal is to get a specific research appropriation in the Governor’s budget which is typically unveiled at the end of the year. The full Legislature would then have to approve the appropriation.
Florida Citrus Mutual and the citrus industry were saddened by the passing of several longtime members and friends during the summer of 2012. We extend our heartfelt sympathies and thoughts to each of the families that lost a loved one during this time.

Florida Citrus Hall of Fame member, Dr. Robert “Bob” Bullock, passed away July 31 at the age of 87. Dr. Bullock was a career entomologist, holding a faculty position at the University of Florida/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center in Ft. Pierce, serving as a research scientist for the USDA Agricultural Research Service at the US Horticultural Research Laboratory in Ft. Pierce, and serving as a consultant for KeyPlex, Inc. Dr. Bullock also served in the U.S. Army for a decade and was decorated with a Bronze Star Medal.

Florida citrus pioneer, Austin Caruso Sr., passed away August 1 at the age of 91. After serving in WWII in the U.S. Army, Caruso eventually joined the family citrus business, Southern Fruit Distributors, and served as President of the company for 34 years. He was active in numerous industry and community organizations including the Florida Citrus Processors Association, National Juice Association, Rotary, and many others.

Brent Gabler, 74, passed away June 27. With a degree in Industrial Engineering, Gabler’s career included stints at US Steel, Bird’s Eye Foods and Phillip Morris USA, along with Tropicana Products in Bradenton. Gabler served as Plant Manager before being promoted to Corporate Vice President of Manufacturing and Engineering, and then to Corporate Vice President of International Procurement. After retiring from Tropicana, he co-founded Creative Citrus Services and served as its President.

David Vincent Kerns passed away August 11 at the age of 95. After his father purchased land in central Florida in the 1930s with dreams of becoming a citrus grower, Kerns grew up planting trees and working the groves during the summers. After graduating from Emory University he received his law degree from the University of Florida in 1939 and was admitted to the Florida Bar the same year. Kerns had a private law practice in Tampa for several years before moving to Tallahassee and serving in all three branches of the Florida government. Kerns also served in the Intelligence Service of the U.S. Army during WWII.

Gaylon M. Lawrence, 78, passed away July 10. Owner of Premier Citrus Packers in Vero Beach, Lawrence was a landowner and farmer, with ownership in various other businesses. Born and raised in Arkansas, he attended Iowa State University earning his degree in agriculture/economics. Lawrence was in the U.S. Air Force from 1955-1960, serving as a First Lieutenant.

J.W. Perdue, Sr., 82, passed away August 5. A citrus grower and cattleman, Perdue owned Perdue Groves & Ranch. He was past President of Alturas Packing Company, Airport Grove Corp., Hardee Cattleman Association, the State High School Rodeo Association, and numerous other industry and civic organizations.

Citrus icon and inventor, Bert Roper, passed away July 4 at the age of 88. Born in Winter Garden, Roper grew up in the citrus industry. He earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Emory University before enlisting in the Navy during WWII. He later completed his master’s degree at the University of Pittsburgh. Roper served as President of the family’s Roper Growers Cooperative. Among many other accomplishments and contributions to the citrus industry, Roper invented the Tree-See Control System, a system for spraying trees more efficiently. Roper was inducted into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame in 2001.

Pasco County grower Fred Snell, 92, passed away July 6. After studying agriculture at Clemson University, Snell served in WWII as a Second Lieutenant with the 75th Infantry Division in Germany. Moving to Winter Haven in 1946, he began a career with General Foods, supervising a citrus processing plant. Snell bought 40 acres in Hudson in 1953 and planted orange and grapefruit trees, commuting from Winter Haven to work the groves for 13 years. Those groves were sold following the freezes, but Snell kept 17 acres in Hernando County, and also maintained about 400 acres for members of the cooperative that his brother managed until its closure in 1990.

Alex B. “Jack” Veech, Jr. passed away in July at the age of 87. Born and raised in Kentucky, Veech entered the University of Kentucky before leaving to serve in the U.S. Army Air Force as a first lieutenant during WWII. After returning from the war, Veech continued his studies at the University of Kentucky earning his bachelor’s degree in agriculture. Upon graduation he began managing his family’s Florida citrus groves. From 1980 until his death, Veech managed Ford Properties in DeLand, which included citrus, cattle and timber. In addition to numerous other civic and industry organizations, Veech served as a board member on the South Lake Apopka Citrus Growers’ Cooperative.

Highlands County Extension Offers Citrus Water Seminar

The Highlands County Extension Program, the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association, and Florida Citrus Mutual, are sponsoring a “Citrus Water Seminar: Introduction to the Revised Citrus BMP and other Water-Related Topics”. The seminar will be held Wednesday, September 26, 2012, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Bert J. Harris, Jr. Agricultural Center in Sebring, Florida.

The seminar will focus on several water-related topics of interest to citrus growers. The primary subject will be an introduction to the new “Florida Citrus Best Management Practice” manual which incorporates all former Citrus BMP’s into one Florida Citrus BMP including the former Ridge Nitrate BMP. The New Florida Citrus BMP manual will include a few new requirements, a check sheet, and a new NOI (Notice of Intent Form). Those growers in the former Ridge Nitrate BMP will have to submit a check sheet and NOI form for each grove they own or manage under the new BMP.


Pre-registration is REQUIRED. To register either Email Becca at southardr@ufl.edu, or FAX (863) 402-6540 the following information: Name, email address, and telephone number.
FCM President Mark Wheeler talks to reporter David Gura of the national business radio show Marketplace. Gura was in Dundee to do a story on the state of Florida’s economy that will run during the Republican National Convention. Gura was interested in getting an update on how Florida’s $9 billion citrus industry is faring in the current economy. Wheeler and Gura discussed HLB, real estate development and how citrus is still a formidable economic engine.

A group of Mutual representatives recently met with Congresswoman Vern Buchanan in Sarasota to talk about the 2012 Farm Bill. President Mark Wheeler and Board member Fran Becker as well as member Mac Carraway and CEO Mike Sparks told Buchanan, who sits on the House Ways and Means Committee, to protect the gains specialty crops made in the last Farm Bill in areas such as research funding, crop insurance and conservation programs. The Senate passed its version of the Farm Bill in June however the House has yet to take action. Pressure to pass a new Farm Bill or extend the current five-year bill that expires on Sept. 30 could intensify when Congress returns from its summer recess next month.

USDA Deputy Under Secretary Rebecca Blue visited Florida recently to get an update from FCM on growers’ efforts to control HLB, canker and black spot. Blue, who oversees APHIS, was very interested in the effectiveness of Citrus Health Management Areas and the Citrus Health Response Program. In the photo, Mutual Board member Paul Meador and CEO Mike Sparks lead Blue on a grove tour in Southwest Florida. Blue thanked Mutual for being part of the tour and said the trip was extremely informative.
Florida Agriculture in the Classroom Board members look over program materials during the recent FAITC Board Retreat in Sarasota. Tamara Wood, Mutual’s Communications Consultant pictured in the center, sits on FAITC’s Board.

FAITC develops and trains teachers and agriculture industry volunteers in its agricultural curricula and materials, which they in turn use to educate students about the importance of agriculture. It also provides grant money to teachers and volunteers for projects that teach students where their food comes from, and the important contributions Florida Farmers make to their communities and their state.

Florida Agriculture in the Classroom is funded by sales of the specialty agricultural license plate known as the Ag Tag. To learn more about FAITC, visit www.flagintheclassroom.org. To purchase an Ag Tag, visit your local tag office or go online to https://www.eztagfl.com/ag.htm.

**CRDF Sets Assessment Rate for 2012-2013 Season**

On July 2, 2012 the Citrus Research Development Foundation recommended to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services an assessment rate of three cents (3¢) per each standard packed box of citrus fruit for the season August 1, 2012 through July 31, 2013. In accordance with the Citrus Research Order and Section 573.118, Florida Statutes, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has set the assessment rate at three cents (3¢) per each standard packed box of citrus fruit for the season August 1, 2012 through July 31, 2013.

**Fresh Citrus Update**

*Season through 6/24/2012*

**Utilization**

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<th>ORANGES**</th>
<th>GRAPEFRUIT</th>
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<tr>
<td>2011-12****</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UTILIZATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>(1,000 1-3/5 bushel boxes)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
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**Fresh Shipments***

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*Offshore Exports, **Includes Temples, ***Average price across all sizes, ****Certified through 6/3

Source: Citrus Admin. Committee