



Research, Education, and Economics (REE) -- Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS)
National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board

December 9, 2021

Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Deputy Under Secretary and Acting Chief Scientist Shefali Mehta
Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
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Director Carrie Castille
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

RE: The NAREEE Board's Citrus Disease Subcommittee's (CDS) Recommendations for the Research Priorities for the FY2022 Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension (ECDRE) Program

Dear REE and USDA Leadership:

Section 7103 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) established the Citrus Disease Subcommittee (CDS) as a permanent subcommittee of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board to provide advice and recommendations to USDA to help advance the research and extension capabilities related to citrus diseases. The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 reauthorized the committee.

The Farm Bill also requires the CDS to complete an annual consultation with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to propose a research and extension agenda for the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension (ECDRE) Program by (a) recommending annual research priorities for the award of the ECDRE grants; and (b) providing comments on the grants awarded by ECDRE in the previous fiscal year.

The CDS met on November 4, 2021, via videoconference, to provide their annual consultation with NIFA on the ECDRE Program. The subcommittee subsequently met on November 17 and 30, 2021, to discuss ECDRE's nine program research priorities. This letter is being provided to convey (a) the annual research priorities for the program to enable NIFA's release of the Request for Applications



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(RFA) for the ECDRE Program for FY2022.

By unanimous vote, the CDS recommends the following research priorities for the ECDRE Program:

Priority A (Higher Priority)

A coordination network to facilitate greater sharing of HLB research results nationally, at the state level, and internationally. The goals of the CN(s) would be to develop and support resources for data collection and management, develop tools for evaluation of progress and assess the effectiveness of research and extension efforts, and help identify priority research and extension needs. It is expected that the coordination network(s) will work closely with NIFA and the CDS to ensure that its analyses inform decision making and increase the effectiveness of the ECDRE Program.

Priority B (Lower Priority)

The subcommittee recommends the existing nine research priorities from FY2021 be emphasized again, without revision, in FY2022. These priorities are attached to this letter as Appendix A.

Other ECDRE Program Recommendations that Relate to Research Priorities 'A' and 'B' Above

While the subcommittee had engaged discussions about each individual research priority and its merits, goals, relevancy, and attainability, significant discussion also occurred surrounding the notion that the committee felt rushed and that we were being asked to evaluate priorities without salient information of what prior research funding cycle projects have and have not accomplished.

The subcommittee strenuously recommends that one or more coordination networks be funded in order to provide ourselves and NIFA with comprehensive yet digestible summaries of prior and current HLB research results, shortcomings, and deficits. This will enable the CDS members to perform a more informed assessment of the nine individual research priorities. In addition to the coordination network(s), the CDS recommends the following meeting cadence in order to more effectively discuss and digest NIFA ECDRE's research priorities:

- CDS meetings with NIFA to occur in the spring and late summer (August) of each fiscal year to discuss grant projects awarded in the most recent FY, and also in previous fiscal years. This helps the CDS understand if the research priorities continue to be met mid-project and to better assess project progress, outcomes, endings, accelerations, etc;
- CDS meeting with NIFA in August of each fiscal year after the ECDRE National Program Leads make their funding recommendations for the current fiscal year (The CDS members could sign a non-disclosure agreement with NIFA as their ECDRE Program recommendations aren't public knowledge at that time.) Waiting to meet with NIFA until the projects are



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publicly released (this year it was in November) results in a compressed timeline that doesn't allow for the most robust and thoughtful evaluation of the ECDRE Program by the CDS.

We ask that these recommendations are appropriately conveyed for inclusion and consideration in the FY2022 ECDRE RFA and Program. On behalf of the CDS, we look forward to our continued work and collaboration on this important issue. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Kate Lewis, Executive Director of the NAREEE Advisory Board at 202-631-1434 or kate.lewis@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edmund R. Buckner".

Edmund R. Buckner
Chair, NAREEE Advisory Board

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William 'Gee' Roe III".

William "Gee" Roe III
Chair, Citrus Disease Subcommittee (CDS)