It is time to “keep our eyes on the prize”

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My good friend Jim Gorden is always reminding us to keep our eyes on the prize, or as many of us translate, keep our focus on the “goal”. Now, more than ever, we must remember that the common goal of all of our industry programs is to keep the California citrus industry free from the invasion of huanglongbing (HLB) disease. We already know that the threat is real and that there are reservoirs of HLB in California. The challenge now is to keep the populations of Asian citrus psyllid contained to their current locations and to find and remove the trees that are carrying the bacteria.

The reason that I bring this up again is that the industry has been faced with new challenges in ACP population control in a wider range of locations throughout the state. Each time a new find or a new area is added to the list, there is some level of activity that causes a great deal of concern. It also causes growers, regulators, and any other groups in the chain to react to the new developments in different ways. “Why am I having to do ____?” is usually the question asked. The answer lies in the worldwide history of the insect and the spread of the disease. We are constantly pointing to Florida and Brazil as examples of how ACP and HLB have taken hold, expanded, and caused devastating damage. The lessons learned the hard way by producers in those other areas have impressed upon us how vital it is to react swiftly to keep populations of ACP as low as possible and not let ACP or HLB become established in a grove setting. Sometimes the reactions required may seem harsh and restrictive, but they truly are necessary if we are going to survive the overall threat from this problem.

Eventually, we will have more tools available to us to fight this valid fight. The CRB has been investing your dollars in programs that will help with issues such as early detection of HLB in trees that do not yet show the symptoms. Also, the Board has invested in projects to improve the Asian citrus psyllid trapping system with attractants and lures. New tools developed through this research are working through the regulatory approval process, and some are now close to deployment. Please watch future issues of Citrograph for articles describing how these various programs will work together to improve your ability as growers to keep your investments safe for many years to come.

One of the tools coming soon will be the use of biological control agents in conjunction with IPM programs. The article in this issue points out some of the preliminary work underway to be able to release large numbers of *Tamarixia radiata* in urban areas and commercial groves. This will add another tool to the box for ACP population reductions.

Well, the race is on!! Everyone is working as rapidly as possible to reach the goal. And now more than ever is the time for cooperation within the industry while all of us “Keep Our Eyes on the Prize”.