

UF-IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center in Homestead Receives a \$3.45 million grant from USDA NIFA to research Laurel Wilt Disease in Avocado.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recently awarded a \$3.45 million grant to the University of Florida – IFAS, Tropical Research and Education Center to study Laurel Wilt an important disease of avocados. Dr. Randy Ploetz, the project director, and other scientists in Florida and Minnesota will investigate this important disease. “Laurel wilt of avocado is a complex and difficult problem, as it involves unknown beetle vectors, a virulent and unusual pathogen, *Raffaelea lauricola*, and a susceptible host,” said Ploetz. “The disease is threatens Florida’s avocado industry and may threaten avocado production in California and areas outside the USA.”

Ploetz said this project will fill critical data gaps on laurel wilt and the ambrosia beetle vectors, develop novel and cost-effective measures to manage the disease and vectors and assess the economics of control measures and their adoption by producers.

An industry advisory committee has been formed to provide and maintain close linkages among the project research and extension faculty and stakeholders in Florida. Stakeholders in Florida and California will be advised on the disease’s status, consulted on project objectives, and informed on advances in its management; information will be presented in diverse formats in both English and Spanish.

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