

## **A Look Back at the Tomato Breeders Roundtable**

*John W. Scott*

University of Florida, IFAS, Gulf Coast Research & Education Center, 14625 CR 672, Wimauma, FL 33598

The Tomato Breeders Roundtable (TBRT) has been the premier meeting in North America of public and industry scientists interested in tomato improvement and it attracts researchers from around the world. The impetus for the TBRT started with a group of tomato researchers primarily interested in sharing information useful to the tomato canning industry in the Midwest. Early meetings were rather informal and associated with field days in Ohio and Indiana. The first mention of the Tomato Breeders Round Table was made for a meeting in Illinois in 1957. Thus, this year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the TBRT! Meetings were held annually until 1981 and since then has been meeting about every 1 . years. The meeting name used to have both words Round and Table until 1988 when Roundtable was adopted. Many early meetings were held in Chicago during February at the La Salle Hotel. Meetings then began to be held at various locations including warmer climates where field plots could be examined. Most meetings have been in the United States with one in Canada, two in Mexico, and one in Guatemala. The TBRT met 6 times with the Tomato Quality Workgroup and one time with the Tomato Disease Workshop. Early meetings were methods related and much informal discussion occurred. The forum facilitated much germplasm exchange which was very useful to the breeding programs and grower clientele alike. Over the years the meetings have become more formal but still maintain the spirit of the original meetings where there is more discussion than at many types of meetings. Panel discussions have been an integral component for many meetings. The meetings still have area reports to allow participants to be aware of the latest issues in various growing regions. These reports now include some from around the world from international participants. The Tomato Crop Germplasm Committee meets in conjunction with the TBRT and a summary report is given to the group. Reports from the USDA germplasm program, the Tomato Genetics Resource Center, and the Tomato Genetics Cooperative (TGC) are typically presented. Discussion of the early years including some of the participants and accomplishments will be made and contrasted with present day issues. A paper describing the TBRT history is in the 2007 TGC and

this will be updated on the TGC website <http://tgc.ifas.ufl.edu/> with the help of TBRT group who will be solicited for their input.