

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
PRODUCTION RESEARCH COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

March 16, 2011

A meeting of the Production Research Committee (PRC) of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) was held on Wednesday, March 16, 2011 in the CAC board room in Irvine, California, with the following people present:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Shane Tucker, Chair
John Burr (via conference call)
Reuben Hofshi
John Lamb
Tom Royden
Louis Santiago

GUESTS PRESENT:

Tom Pecht
Norm Traner
Charley Wolk
Gary Woodworth
Bradley Miles (arrived @ 3:20 p.m.)

CAC STAFF PRESENT:

April Aymami
Tom Bellamore
Jonathan Dixon

ITEM #1 CALL TO ORDER

Roll Call/Establish Quorum- Item 1.A.

Shane Tucker, PRC Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:47 p.m. with a quorum present.

ITEM #2 CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR GUIDING CAC'S TECHNICAL INVESTMENT

Chairman Tucker began the meeting by revisiting the process map created during the March 2, 2011 PRC meeting. He said that the process map presented at the last meeting had been slightly revised to reflect a more simplified and organized flow, however would like committee members to provide further comments and suggestions before it was presented to the board.

It was noted that one major point of possible confusion on the process map was the use of the terms "pre-proposal" and "proposals". The committee felt that some of the researchers may feel as if they would be required to submit detailed proposals twice. Dr. Dixon explained that the pre-proposal step was more a call from program ideas, wherein the committee could weed out programs that did not fit the needs of the Commission. That specific research projects, in further detail, would be called for at the second "proposal" step. A consensus was reached that the "pre-proposal" step could be renamed something along the lines of "call for concept paper" or "concept proposal."

The group also agreed that this “pre-proposal” step would allow for, and encourage, the idea of multi-investigator projects, and that the recipient list for the request for proposal step should be broadened.

Further group discussion of the process map brought about the following thoughts:

- The need to look at past research, successes and failures, and integrate into future research programs
- The need for the current process map to be simplified further, and grouped more logically so that it is easier to follow. There was concern that in its present state it would be difficult for the board and grower community to read and understand the flow of activities.
- The need to build the process map and research program to anticipate emergency situations, such as a pest incursion, and how to address them. That the overall program should have short and long term solutions.
- The need for the process to allow for direct feedback on research as well as an ongoing engagement with the growers throughout the program/results.

Dr. Jonathan Dixon addressed the concerns about chart in greater detail, stating that the process map was created to be a road map and did not go into specific details and tactics, however he would break the chart down further to make it clearer before presenting to the CAC Board.

The committee then moved the conversation forward to focusing on the impediments to each of the strategic imperatives. Chairman Tucker explained that the strategic imperatives came out of the strategy meeting and are what the board determined was what the research program should focus on to move the industry forward. An initial list of impediments was also created, however, due to time constraints the list was not well formed, and so CAC Chairman Charley Wolk has charged PRC with addressing these issues.

The committee delved into issues revolving around the impediment of implementation of effective horticultural practices. The common thread throughout the discussion was that while information was available to growers, many, for a variety of reasons, were not using the information on their groves. Issues to address on this subject included:

- Grower apathy
- Size of grower operations
- Different comfort levels in growers (early innovators, early adopters & general grower population)
- The need to better understand how growers learn (demonstration vs. fact sheets)
- Economics – growers may not commit to a practice because it is either too expensive or they can't see the return on investment
- Lack of reputable advisors available to the grower community

Based on the list of issues raised, Chairman Tucker stated that further information would need to be gathered in order to fully address the next steps that needed to be taken.

Another issue that was raised with the research program in general was that the research was not productive because some programs do not deliver short term projects that could be used for demonstration projects until further down the line. It was agreed that an effective research program would need long-term programs, but that a system of checks and balances would need to be in place. Dr. Dixon felt that programs should have at least three years to see the results. And that even if the project does not deliver the expected results, then at least we have a good answer, but that the project shouldn't be stopped it early. Also, the process will allow for evaluation of a project and for research results showing something interesting and different, could lead the program down a different path for a different project.

Chairman Tucker wrapped up the meeting stating that the PRC still needs to prioritize impediments and identify things the group needs to know about grower education (which would be discussed at the next meeting) He also revisited the idea that Dr. Dixon had mentioned in a previous meeting; key performance indicators. The PRC will need to be able to effectively measure what is being done against the strategic imperatives. The PRC would need to report to the board and show if the programs were effective or not effective.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In the public comment period CAC Commissioner Gary Woodworth stated that the industry needed to maintain a premium quality product. He also asked if the PRC would be making a recommendation to the CAC board on the international alternate bearing project.

The group discussed the alternate bearing project in detail, with Dr. Dixon stating that while the RFPs had been submitted they needed additional work to get them to a point where they are working to take growers forward. Dr. Dixon said he supported the overall idea of the project and that it is something the California industry should get into. Following further discussion on the status of research projects currently underway in California, clarification of where the research would be done on the international project and its applicability to California growers, the consensus of the PRC was that alternate bearing was an important enough issue and that participation in the international project would be beneficial to the California industry.

ADJOURN MEETING

Chairman Tucker adjourned the PRC meeting at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

April Aymami, Industry Affairs Manager