

**2015 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Technical Review Committee**

Public Meeting Minutes

May 22, 2015, 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM
California Department of Food and Agriculture Auditorium
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Committee Members Present

Kathleen Deegan, Chair
John Beck
William Matthews
Megan Sabato
Amy Wolfe

CDFA Staff

Jim Houston	Melissa Bowler	Kyle Montero
Melissa Eidson	Jacqueline Castro	Anna Shkrabak
Crystal Myers	Gagan Gill	James Spencer
Sue Ichiho	Carrie James	
Stephen Tachiera	Erika Lewis-Ortega	

Introductions and Opening Remarks

Mr. Jim Houston, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Undersecretary, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. Undersecretary Houston thanked the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) Technical Review Committee (TRC) for taking the time to participate in the review process and stated that the work of the TRC in reviewing grants adds integrity to the SCBGP process. Undersecretary Houston went on to say that the department is proud of the SCBGP program and listed the six funding categories: Market Enhancement, Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education, Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers, Environmental Stewardship and Conservation, Plant Health and Pest Management, and Food Safety (review process conducted in partnership with the Center for Produce Safety). All of the SCBGP funding categories are vitally important to the success of specialty crops in California. The work of the SCBGP is referenced consistently for helping advance the industry, which demonstrates the importance of the SCBGP for California agriculture and, by extension, the world.

CDFA received 346 concept proposals in Phase I totaling \$99.6 million. Of these, 161 were advanced to Phase II and invited to submit grant proposals, for a total of \$46.3 million. Undersecretary Houston explained that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is expected to award \$63 million in SCBGP funds nationally, with an estimated \$19.7 million allocated for California.

Undersecretary Houston introduced the 2015 SCBGP TRC Chair, Dr. Kathleen Deegan. Dr. Deegan has been a faculty member at California State University, Sacramento for the past seven years as a member of the Family and Consumer Sciences department. She teaches various courses ranging from the cultural aspects of nutrition to sports nutrition. Dr. Deegan has served on the California State University, Sacramento faculty senate for five years and has served four years on the SCBGP TRC. Undersecretary Houston thanked Dr. Deegan for her

service as the committee chair. Dr. Deegan introduced herself to the group and then provided a brief overview of the SCBGP review process.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Subcommittee Reports

Each subcommittee representative presented a brief summary, commented on the review process, and submitted the following Subcommittee Grant Proposal recommendations to the Technical Review Committee Chair.

- **Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers** – Ms. Amy Wolfe introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers funding category. Ms. Wolfe shared that this was her second year serving on the TRC and praised the diverse backgrounds of individuals serving in her subcommittee, which included growers, members of academia, industry representatives, etc. Ms. Wolfe explained that there were many great proposals submitted under this funding category and the subcommittee critically evaluated each in order to be good stewards of USDA's resources. Ms. Wolfe stated that the proposals submitted to this category will ensure members of the industry have the knowledge they need to remain successful. In total, the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers subcommittee reviewed 49 concept proposals totaling \$13.6 million and 26 grant proposals totaling \$5.8 million.
- **Environmental Stewardship and Conservation** – Ms. Megan Sabato introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation funding category. Ms. Sabato shared that the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation funding category was a wonderful group and that she was impressed with the geographic representation throughout the state, which proved helpful in evaluating environmental projects from diverse regions. Ms. Sabato appreciated the technical expertise of those serving on the subcommittee in evaluating the proposals on important environmental topics including water management and soil nutrition. Ms. Sabato explained that the subcommittee paid careful attention to evaluating whether the proposals support the program priorities identified by CDFA. In total, the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation subcommittee reviewed 69 concept proposals totaling \$20.1 million and 32 grant proposals totaling \$9.9 million.
- **Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education** – Dr. Deegan introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education funding category. Dr. Deegan shared that the Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education subcommittee is seeing a growing number of proposals for school gardens and community gardens, as well as some research projects seeking to improve the nutritional value of specialty crops. Dr. Deegan expressed her appreciation for the wide range of nutrition professionals on the committee. The Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education subcommittee reviewed 73 concept proposals totaling \$21.1 million and 39 grant proposals totaling \$11.6 million.
- **Market Enhancement** – Dr. William Matthews introduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Market Enhancement funding category. Dr. Matthews explained that the Market Enhancement subcommittee featured a good cross section of the agriculture industry in California, including members of academia, commodity commissions, producers, etc. Dr. Matthews shared that this was his first experience serving on the committee and it solidified his belief in the diversity of California agriculture. The Market Enhancement subcommittee

received numerous proposals on the marketing of specialty crops at the national as well as international level, all with the main goal of enhancing the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Dr. Matthews stated that the subcommittee had very good discussions and was a good group. The Market Enhancement subcommittee reviewed 69 concept proposals totaling \$19.5 million and 36 grant proposals totaling \$10.3 million.

- **Plant Health and Pest Management** – Dr. John Beck introduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Plant Health and Pest Management funding category. Dr. Beck commended CDFA staff on doing a wonderful job of bringing the teams together and ensuring a diverse range of participants. Dr. Beck stated that as a reviewer, it is interesting to see proposals addressing the important microbes, diseases, and pests that are emerging issues in the California specialty crop industry. Dr. Beck appreciated the diverse backgrounds of the subcommittee members, which provided diversity in opinion and expertise and generated lively discussion. The Plant Health and Pest Management subcommittee reviewed 48 concept proposals totaling \$14.1 million and 21 grant proposals totaling \$6.6 million.

Final Motion

Dr. Deegan moved to submit the SCBGP TRC recommendations from the five subcommittees to CDFA for review. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wolfe. Motion was opened for discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

The meeting was opened for public comments. No comments were voiced.

Closing Remarks

Undersecretary Houston accepted the recommendations of the TRC subcommittees. CDFA will submit the proposals to USDA in early July and announcements are expected in October. Undersecretary Houston thanked all reviewers and CDFA staff for their time, commitment and hard work in supporting California specialty crops.