

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
ANIMAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES (AHFSS)
MEAT, POULTRY AND EGG SAFETY BRANCH (MPES)
RENDERING INDUSTRY ADVISORY BOARD (RIAB)
MEETING MINUTES
July 18, 2024**

California Department of Food and Agriculture
2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 210S, Room 2110
Sacramento, CA 95833

Item

No. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Michael Koewler, Chair, called the RIAB meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

(1) **ROLL CALL**

Roll was taken by Mr. Koewler. A quorum was established at 10:01 a.m.

Board Members Present:

Michael Koewler, Chair
Brad Fleeman
Phil Ottone

D.O. "Spike" Helmick Jr.
T. J. Koewler
David Belt

Interested Parties:

Tristan Daedalus, Baker Commodities
Andy Black, Reno Rendering Company

CDFA:

Dr. Annette Jones
Dr. Fernando Umayam
Brittany Cardoza
Dr. Chandrasekar Venkitasamy
Maribel Urtez
Rachel Andrade
Sedona Quiroz-Lopez

Paula Batarseh
Han Lai
Andrew Halbert
Dr. Ricardo Gaitan
Hilda Favela
Alec Lieu

(2) **INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER**

Mr. Koewler introduced the newest RIAB member, T. J. Koewler.

(3) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Koewler asked the board to review the meeting minutes from March 28, 2024.

Motion #1: Mr. D.O. "Spike" Helmick Jr. made a motion to accept the minutes and Mr. Brad Fleeman seconded the motion. All members agreed with no abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.

(4) BRANCH UPDATES

Ms. Paula Batarseh began by updating the Board on a CDFA outreach effort for National Rendering Day (April 21, 2024). MPES created an infographic highlighting the role of rendering in upcycling animal byproducts. Dr. Ricardo Gaitan translated the infographic into Spanish as well. The infographic was posted to CDFA social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). Ms. Batarseh reported that the likes and impression analytics were favorable, which has encouraged MPES to continue future outreach activities to promote the rendering industry. She added that analytics found that rendering had one of the top posts for CDFA on X/Twitter for the month of April. She also welcomed any suggestions for outreach and education efforts.

Ms. Batarseh then informed the Board that a new Associate Governmental Program Analyst (AGPA) will soon come onboard with MPES. The AGPA, Alexandra Auger, will join the team in September and will assist in the rendering program outreach efforts and drafting new regulations.

Ms. Batarseh shifted to the two on-going composting training and research projects. Compost piles for the California Dairy Research Foundation (CDRF) project have been built at four project sites. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) emergency composting training and exercise project will begin later this summer.

Ms. Batarseh concluded by complimenting the rendering industry for their diligent coordination with MPES in responding to extreme heat events over the past few weeks. She thanked the industry for reporting and updating MPES, as well as managing the carcasses successfully without disruptions; any increase in deadstock or mechanical issues were resolved quickly and effectively.

(5) SB 1383 - USEPA WASTED FOOD SCALE AND STRATEGY

Ms. Batarseh updated the Board that both CDFA and Baker Commodities have submitted separate official comment letters to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), which echo each other regarding concerns that rendering was not sufficiently included in USEPA's Draft National Strategy for Reducing Food Waste and the Wasted Food Scale.

Ms. Batarseh noted an additional letter sent to USEPA by a group of associations, including the American Feed Industry Association, Farm Bureau, Clean Fuels Alliance and Milk Producers Federation. The group reached out to CDFA and requested official support for the letter, which was granted. Ms. Batarseh emphasized CDFA's commitment to highlighting the role of rendering in USEPA's scale and strategy. Eight Senators, including Senator Boozman, Senator Stabenow (head of the Senate Committee on Agriculture) and California's Senator Padilla, were on this letter.

Mr. Tristan Daedalus added that Baker Commodities met with federal agencies at Capitol Hill including USEPA, USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) during the North American Renderers Association in early June. Baker reiterated the rendering industry's deep concerns about the total lack of representation for rendering and rendering products in the new Wasted Food Scale. He found that there is bipartisan concern in the House and Senate regarding the negative agricultural impact of excluding rendering from

the diversion of wastes away from landfills, as well as the exclusion of rendering leading to a decrease in available feed stocks for biofuels.

According to Mr. Daedalus, USEPA informed them that the scale and strategy were developed based on a scientific study on Greenhouse Gas reduction analysis in which rendering data was not included or reviewed. However, USEPA told Baker that they are willing to assess the situation further in the future. Mr. Koewler noted the upcoming Farm Bill being drafted and suggested the rendering industry could negotiate and leverage their presence in the upcoming Bill. Mr. Daedalus affirmed that the Farm Bill explicitly includes rendering as eligible for a meat and poultry production grant program and that many committee members working on the Bill are knowledgeable about the rendering industry and the key role it plays in agriculture. When reaching out to the USEPA, Mr. Daedalus identified a lack of knowledge regarding the benefits of rendering as compared to other disposal methods, like composting. He expressed a need for increased education outreach to regulatory agencies like the USEPA regarding the process and environmental benefits of rendering.

(6) ENFORCEMENT AND OUTREACH

Ms. Cardoza began by presenting the letter drafted by CDFA and the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) regarding instructions for Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) on identifying licensed Inedible Kitchen Grease (IKG) transporters. A copy of the letter was provided to the Board, which outlines regulations related to IKG haulers and provides CDFA resources for POTWs to confirm that IKG transporters are properly licensed. After distributing the letter, MPES saw a small influx in IKG transporter registrations. Ms. Cardoza also informed the board that CDFA investigators are verifying offload sites prior to IKG transporter licensure and as part of routine follow-up.

Ms. Cardoza informed the Board that CDFA's IKG theft website is in the process of being updated with minor changes to the website's text, as well as current pictures to help identify trucks involved in grease theft.

Ms. Cardoza shifted to ongoing rendering regulation changes. Dead hauler signage is still in process. Changes to the penalty matrix are also actively being worked on. The Board was reminded that the main changes pertain to allowing certain violations to be scored as either minor, moderate or serious. This is especially intended to penalize IKG theft by enabling enforcement to stack penalties for egregious or repeated failure to properly manifest IKG collection.

Since the March 2024 meeting, there have been ten (10) Notices of Violation (NOVs) issued for IKG theft, intentionally unlabeled containers, failure to manifest, unlicensed IKG transporters, taking possession of IKG from unlicensed transporters and unsanitary conditions at inedible material collection centers. The total civil penalty assessment for Mar. 2024 – Jun. 2024 NOVs is \$21,995. MPES has also issued five (5) warning letters for acts that can be corrected before NOVs are issued.

Ms. Cardoza gave an update on the Compliance and Enforcement Unit's current cases. There has been an increase in illegal animal slaughter cases in Southern and Central California. There has also been an increase in IKG theft cases in the central valley

(specifically Fresno and Bakersfield), for which any industry leads would be greatly appreciated. Ms. Cardoza noted an increase in complaints about unsanitary conditions at some animal collection centers; investigators may be checking in on these facilities more frequently with the increased hot weather to ensure compliance and respond appropriately to public complaints.

(7) COORDINATION WITH REGULATORY AGENCIES

Ms. Batarseh updated the Board on the increase in international trade of used cooking oil (UCO). She shared a summary of a letter on the subject drafted by six State Senators from the Senate Committee on Agriculture, addressed to administrators with USEPA, USDA, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, dated June 20, 2024. The letter presents concerns regarding increased imports of UCO into the U.S. and the potential for importers to exploit tax incentives by adulterating UCO with virgin vegetable oils (such as palm oil).

Ms. Batarseh reiterated that demand for renewable fuels is driving competition to pursue U.S. tax credits. The letter authors request that UCO importers be held to the same scrutiny to which domestic sectors are subject. They close by asking the aforementioned federal agencies to provide further information on their verification processes, protocols and other enforcement actions for imported UCO. The California Air Resources Board is interested due to potential impacts to the Low Carbon Fuel Standard; they are developing a policy to bar fraudulent imports from tax credit eligibility. Ms. Batarseh informed the Board that a copy of letter will be sent to them after the meeting.

Mr. Andy Black asked if foreign UCO importers are held to the same standards as the U.S. rendering industry with respect to traceability and disclosure of oil destination. Ms. Batarseh confirmed that the letter presents the same inquiry and outlines specific requests that reiterate the authors' demand for transparency of the federal agencies' testing, verification and enforcement protocols.

(8) PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made.

(9) FUTURE RIAB MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

Board members did not have any additional items beyond the standing items listed below:

- Regulations Update
- SB 1383
- Coordination with Regulatory Agencies
- Enforcement & Outreach

(10) UPCOMING RIAB MEETING DATES

The next board meeting will be scheduled for October 2024, the first or second Thursday. CDFA staff will send a Doodle poll to determine the date and will notify all concerned once it is finalized.

(11) **ADJOURN**

Motion #3: Mr. Fleeman made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Phil Ottone seconded the motion. All members agreed with no abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Sedona Quiroz-Lopez