

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
ANIMAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES (AHFSS)
MEAT, POULTRY AND EGG SAFETY BRANCH (MPES)
SHELL EGG ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 21, 2021**

California Department of Food and Agriculture
2800 Gateway Oaks Drive, Room 267
Sacramento, CA 95833

Item
No.

(1) ADJOURN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Mike Gemperle motioned to adjourn the previous Subcommittee Meeting that was held on March 30, 2021. Steve Mahrt seconded the motion.

The subcommittee meeting was adjourned.

(2) ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken by Mr. Michael Abbott, Egg Quality Manager, Egg Safety and Quality Management (ESQM). A quorum was established at 9:05 a.m.

Michael Gemperle was appointed as Acting Chair for this meeting due to David Wills absence and John Bedell was a voting member.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mike Gemperle, Vice Chair
John Bedell, Acting Chair
Mike Sencer, Hidden Villa Ranch
Steve Mahrt, Petaluma Farms
Andrew Demler, Demler Brothers
Kaliko Orian, Kaliko Farms
Lupe Gutierrez, NuCal Foods
Glenn Hickman, Hickman Family Farms
Richard Breitmeyer, Public Member
John Bedell, Alternate
Frank Hilliker, Alternate
Cathy Roache, CACASA Representative, Non-Voting Member

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Debbie Murdock

CDFA:

William Rohner
Dr. Elizabeth Cox
Logan Bartley

Michael Abbott
Paula Batarseh
Laura Barlow

(3) **INTRODUCTIONS**

Members of the Shell Egg Advisory Committee as well as the staff working with the California Department of Food and Agriculture introduced themselves.

(4) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mike Gemperle asked SEAC to review the meeting minutes from March 9, 2021.

Motion #1: Mike Sencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Steve Mahrt seconded the motion. All members agreed with no abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.

(5) **SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

Michael Abbott introduced the Proposed Definition of Cage-Free as discussed in the Subcommittee Meeting held on March 30, 2021.

The Proposed Definition of Cage-Free:

“Cage Free” labeling means at a minimum, eggs come from hens that have been raised in a Cage Free Housing System that includes an indoor or outdoor controlled environment for egg-laying hens within which hens are free to roam unrestricted except by external walls. Hens are provided enrichments that allow them to exhibit natural behaviors including, at a minimum, scratch areas, perches, nest boxes, and dust bathing areas, within which farm employees can provide care while standing within the hens’ usable floorspace. Egg laying hens are raised in a housing system that meets the minimum requirements of 1 square foot of useable floor space per bird for multi-tiered aviaries and partially slatted systems or 1.5 square feet of useable floor space per bird for single-level all-litter floor systems.”

Motion #2: Glenn Hickman motioned to adopt this definition of Cage-Free and to direct staff to put it into regulation. Mike Sencer seconded. All members agreed with no abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.

(6) **PROPOSITION 12 - LABELING**

Michael Abbott began this agenda item by stating that there had been comments made about whether the “CA SEFS Compliant” label would be necessary going forward. He explained that Shell Egg Food Safety requirements and Proposition 12 requirements are separate, and thus the existing Shell Egg Food Safety label would still be in place once Proposition 12 has regulations in effect.

Dr. Elizabeth Cox explained that there is a draft of Proposition 12 that proposes that all shell egg cartons would be required to have “CA Cage-Free” or “California Cage-Free” as a label. She further stated that once that draft goes into its Public Comment period, there can possibly be updates made to the draft based on feedback.

Steve Mahrt expressed concern with the proposed labeling as stated by Dr. Cox. He explained that the term “California Cage-Free” could be easily misunderstood by consumers into believing that the eggs were produced in the State of California.

There was also concern that the proposed label would not differentiate eggs produced in California and eggs produced out of state, and that some would take advantage of that and advertise out of state eggs as California-Produced eggs.

This item will be considered during the next Shell Egg Advisory Committee Meeting.

(7) **AB 954**

Michael Abbott introduced this agenda item by explaining that this bill is a suggestion, not a requirement. The goal of the bill was to make it easier for consumers to understand that when products get to their Sell-By Date, they are still edible.

The committee decided to not pursue any action regarding Assembly Bill 954.

(8) **2022 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Discussion regarding the 21/22 FY Budget was opened to the committee.

Steve Mahrt and Glenn Hickman expressed disappointment in the proposed budget and wanted it to be reconsidered. They felt that there was nothing being done with the money taken from the Mill Fee Assessments and wanted to rescind the proposed mill fee increase.

Motion #2: Steve Mahrt motioned to accept the budget, and to modify the Mill Fee to keep it at ten cents per case. Glenn Hickman seconded the motion. The motion passed with four in favor, two opposed, and three abstentions.

This item will be considered during the next SEAC Meeting.

(9) **FORM 700 UPDATE**

Michael Abbott offered to create a checklist of required training that is needed to simplify it for those taking it.

(10) **IN PERSON MEETING DISCUSSION**

Michael Abbott began by stating that limited gatherings are possible, however not recommended.

Paula Batarseh stated that if a committee member feels that they will function better or feels strongly that they need to be in a room, there may be flexibility to create a hybrid model where a few members can meet in person while the remaining participants meet virtually.

(11) **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were made.

(12) **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Proposition 12 - Labeling
- Mill Fee Update
- Proposition 12 Update

(13) **UPCOMING SEAC MEETING DATES**

The next Shell Egg Advisory Committee Meeting will be held on July 21, 2021 at 10:00am via Zoom and in Room 267 at 2800 Gateway Oaks Drive in Sacramento, California.

(14) **ADJOURN**

Chair Gemperle asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion #3: John Bedell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rich Breitmeyer seconded the motion. All members agreed with no abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Logan Bartley