

**MEETING OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE-  
BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC) PRODUCER ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
(ALL MEETINGS OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC)**

**Location:**

Citrus Pest and Disease Division – Fresno Office  
2895 N Larkin Avenue,  
Suite A, Fresno, CA 93727

**Contact:**

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**MEETING MINUTES OF May 15, 2024**

Item No.

**(1) CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at approximately 10:07 a.m., Thea Rittenhouse, Farmer Equity Advisor opened the meeting.

**(2) ROLL CALL**

**Present:**

Hung Doan

Dennis Hutson

Javier Cruz

Arshdeep Singh

Qi Zhou

Mireya Gomez Contreras

Minkah Taharkah

Emily Burgueño (virtual)

Donald Sherman (virtual)

Kenneth Sparks II (virtual)

**Absent:**

Lena Ortega

Tania Zuñiga

**(3) DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

Carmen Carrasco, CDFA Small Farm Business Liaison, provided the committee with an update on the USDA's Southwest Regional Food Business Center (SWRFBC), which is seeking applicants to their stakeholder advisory council.

Virginia Jameson, CDFA Deputy Secretary of Climate and Working Lands provided department updates on two current projects: the CDFA Climate Resilience Strategy and the "Regenerative Agriculture" definition process. Deputy Secretary Jameson provided background on both projects, including the impetus for the projects, their respective timelines, and the status. Deputy Secretary Jameson received questions on this update and a question was asked about tribal input during Public Listening sessions for the Consortium on Specialty Crops.

**(4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 15 Meeting - Committee Chair Hung K. Doan**

Chair Hung K Doan called meeting to order at 10:26 a.m.

Committee Chair Doan called for the approval of the February 15, 2024 Meeting.

Member Hutson motioned to approve the minutes of the prior meeting of the BIPOC Producer Advisory Committee. Member Burgueño seconded the motion.

Approval of minutes: All present committee members approved.

Public comment: None.

#### **(5) UPDATE AND DISCUSSION: Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Update**

BIPOC Producer Advisory Committee member and Ag Land Equity Task Force (ALETf) Liaison to the committee, Qi Zhou provided an update on the recent ALETf meeting in San Diego. The update described the meeting and included key takeaways from the meeting. Thea Rittenhouse contributed her perspective as a Task Force member and described her experience visiting the Tijuana Valley Farm. Both Member Zhou and Rittenhouse noted the persistent challenge of farmers needing to compete for land access and the threat of developers to small farmers. Member Zhou concluded her update with noting the formation of new sub-committees including the resource outreach sub-committee and the grants and resource landscape sub-committee.

There was one committee question on the role of the Strategic Growth Council.

Public comment: None.

#### **(6) PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: May Revise Governor's Budget Update**

CDFA Deputy Secretary for Administration and Finance, Arima Kozina, was unable to attend this session, so Staff Services Manager Taryn Mori from CDFA's Budget Office provided the committee with an update on the 2024 May Revise Governor's Budget. Ms. Mori provided a brief background on the budget process, where the budget is currently and what the future phases are, and provided PDF handouts that described this process. Ms. Mori then provided information on the current budget deficit and described the changes that were made in the May Revise, with a focus on CDFA's budget. Mori explained the Governor's directive to cut funding as well as specifically discussed a 2.8M reversion from SWEEP funding, a 5M reduction from CUSP, and shifts from General Fund to the Green House Gas Reduction Fund. Ms. Mori emphasized that only unspent funds are being reverted and no changes will occur to encumbered funds.

Member Gomez and Member Taharkah asked clarifying questions about the budget process.

The presentation concluded without formal action by the Committee.

Public Comment: None.

#### **(7) PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: CDFA Block Grant Model**

Thea Rittenhouse introduced the next discussion topic, the CDFA Block Grant Model, and introduced Carolyn Cook, CDFA Environmental Manager with the Office of Environmental Farming & Innovation (OEFI), to provide a presentation on the CDFA Block Grant Model.

Carolyn Cook presented on the CDFA Block Grant Model and how it has been implemented into SWEEP and HSP's programs. Ms. Cook provided the committee with a background on the SWEEP program and how the block grant model supports the overall program goal. Ms. Cook provided a similar background for the HSP program. Ms. Cook noted that for both programs the block grant model provides both technical assistance and direct assistance to producers and that block grantees are often well positioned to provide this assistance due to more specialized local knowledge, existing relationships, and ability to establish relationships.

Ms. Cook opened the discussion for questions from committee members. The committee asked questions and had a discussion on the distribution of the SWEEP block grant funds to regional administrators (organizations) and provided feedback that the method of scoring SWEEP block-grant administrator applications needs to consider geography. The members emphasized that no applicants from the Central Valley counties received awards. Committee members provided suggestions such as prioritizing or setting aside funds for Central Valley applicants in future solicitations as well as adjusting the evaluation criteria. There was also a discussion on producer experiences working with block grantees (fund administrators) and challenges with significant delays in receiving reimbursements. Members provided feedback on accountability solutions to ensure that block grantees are evaluated, and their performance is considered in future solicitations.

The presentation concluded without formal action by the Committee.

Public comment:

Lilian with UC Fresno Small Farm program asked a question on the level of public comment SWEEP received on the evaluation criteria element of the program framework.

Meaghan Donovan, UC Agricultural and Natural Resources (UCANR) Small Farms Program Manager attended the meeting virtually and commented as member of the public on the CUSP program and the importance of communication, a need for communication solutions, and the challenges and confusion that occurs when there are so many entities involved in the administration of grants. Ms. Donovan noted the burden that this can all place on technical assistance providers, and stressed the importance of streamlining standards to address barriers.

## **(8) PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: CDFA Produce Safety Division and FDA Food Safety Modernization Act**

Geetika Joshi, CDFA Produce Safety Program Manager, presented on the CDFA Produce Safety Division and recent updates to the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Ms. Joshi provided an overview of the program's principles and background. Ms. Joshi explained specific services offered by the program including the On Farm Readiness Review (OFRR) which is a free-of-charge mock inspection performed by the program to help farmers in preparing for produce safety regulatory inspections. Ms. Joshi also provided information on the new FSMA rule and discussed the role of technical assistance providers to provide support to producers.

Members of the committee asked clarifying and additional questions about the FSMA program and available financial assistance to comply with regulations. Member Sparks asked a question about what CDFA is going to build trust with producers in the regulatory context. There was a discussion on the importance of technical assistance and education of technical assistance providers.

The presentation concluded without formal action by the Committee.

Public comment: None.

#### **(9) TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETING DISCUSSIONS**

Voting item: Add a standing update from the Small-Scale Producer Advisory Committee.

Member Hutson made a motion to vote. Member Zhou made a second.

**Voting outcome:** This item was unanimously accepted by committee members.

Voting item: If the joint meeting between the BIPOC advisory committee and the Small-Scale Producer Advisory committee should occur during the Winter.

Member Hutson made a motion to vote. Member Cruz made a second.

**Voting outcome:** This item was unanimously accepted by committee members.

Ms. Rittenhouse noted that additional agenda items may be submitted in writing to Chair Doan, Ms. Rittenhouse, or Ms. Carrasco, but noted that there are challenges with getting speakers for agenda items on short notice and requested that members request agenda items as in advance as possible. Ms. Rittenhouse added that the previously proposed agenda item to include SGMA has been considered and is already added to the agenda of the next meeting.

#### **(10) PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Committee heard public comments for items not on the agenda. One individual provided public comment:

Lillian UC ANR, UC ANR is trending toward flood and drought and concerned about the CUSP dollars being reverted. Described that most dollars are being asked for flood. Raises questions about the equitable distribution of these dollars.

#### **(11) CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Doan adjourned meeting at approximately 1:08 p.m.