



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)  
AVOCADO INSPECTION COMMITTEE (AIC)  
March 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes  
Teleconference**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Bryce Bannatyne – Vice Chair  
John Schaap – Chair  
Salvador Dominguez  
Keith Blanchard  
Stewart Lockwood  
Wayne Brydon

**CDFA REPRESENTATIVES**

Steve Patton  
Stacey Hughes  
Sam Santander  
Mitchell King  
Marcee Yount  
Thomas Osborn

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Aaruni Thakur  
Marc Fallini

**INTERESTED PARTIES**

April Aymami, CA Avocado Commission (CAC)  
Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia, UC Riverside  
Ken Melban, CAC  
Monica Arnett, CAC  
Tom Bellamore, CAC

**ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by John Schaap, Chair.

**ITEM 2: INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL**

Roll was called by Mitchell King, introductions were made, and a quorum was established. King noted that Wayne Brydon would be serving as a voting member in Marc Fallini's absence. Bryce Bannatyne, Vice Chair, joined the meeting during Agenda Item 4: Review of September 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

**ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**ITEM 4: REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 MEETING MINUTES**

Chair Schaap asked for a motion to approve of the September 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes as presented.

**MOTION:** Keith Blanchard moved to approve the September 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes as presented. Bryce Bannatyne seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **ITEM 5: COMMITTEE VACANCY AND TERMS REPORT**

King provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report.

#### **ITEM 6: REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED CDFA FISCAL YEAR 2021/22 BUDGET**

Marcee Yount and Steve Patton presented the Proposed CDFA Fiscal Year (FY) 2021/22 Budget. The proposed budget included \$178,591 for personal services; \$63,214 for operating expenses and equipment; a gas tax credit of \$2,460; and a pro rata cash adjustment of \$13,640 for a total budget of \$252,985.

Chair Schaap asked for a motion to approve the CDFA Proposed Budget for the FY 2021/22 as presented.

**MOTION:** Stewart Lockwood moved to approve the Proposed CDFA FY 2021/22 Budget as presented. Bryce Bannatyne seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **ITEM 7: PROGRAM UPDATES**

Sam Santander provided Program Updates. Santander thanked the industry for implementing guidelines to protect their staff and CDFA staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Santander also informed the committee that the program is in its last year of the GEM Research Project and has already tested 1,461 pieces of fruit as a part of the project during the year.

Santander then stated that the program has certified 12,779,843 pounds of fruit from November 2020 to February 2021; conducted 552 size and weight tests, with only two violations and 155 containers rejected; the program has also issued 132 exemption permits for Certified Farmers' Markets and 63 field certifications; the program also conducted 148 informational tests not related to the GEM Research Project. Santander informed the committee that no official maturity testing had been performed to date.

There was brief discussion on the work conducted by Santander and other staff at Certified Farmers' Markets throughout the state of California. Members of the committee asked both Santander and Stacey Hughes about the processes involved in ensuring the integrity of avocados sold at Certified Farmers' Markets throughout California. Hughes and Yount explained that there are penalties for violations applied not only to sellers but also to market managers.

### **ITEM 8: DISCUSSION OF FUTURE WIND SCARING RESEARCH**

Vice Chair Bannatyne suggested revisiting the topic of Wind Scaring at a future meeting to allow for further input from Dave Holden, Holden Research and Consulting. Chair Schaap spoke in favor of continued research on Wind Scaring given the discussions at previous committee meetings. Chair Schaap also offered to help recruit GEM growers into future research efforts. Vice Chair Bannatyne suggested asking Holden to support such efforts given Holden's knowledge and experience.

Patton informed the committee that any research project would have to be designed to be applicable to the committee, meaning the project would have to focus on the certification or inspection process for avocados. This led to discussion between Patton and Vice Chair Bannatyne on the work such a future project might involve as well as input from Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia, UC Riverside, on various projects that have been done previously in the industry.

### **ITEM 9: GEM VARIETY UPDATES**

Dr. Arpaia provided GEM Variety Updates. Dr. Arpaia described the 12 sites being used for sampling in the information presented as well as tree ages and sampling methods used. Dr. Arpaia described the trends identified in the data after two complete years of the project in various regions of the state, with data from the third year being gathered and asked for input from the committee on the future direction of the project given the apparent popularity of GEM variety avocados among growers.

Dr. Arpaia noted that the data from each of the three years of the work are different from each other, with fruit maturing more rapidly in both years one and three regionally but stressed that this is not seen at individual collection sites necessarily. There was discussion between the committee and Dr. Arpaia on how to approach future maturity date decisions. Discussion also occurred regarding the relation of fruit maturity to fruit taste tests and customer perception. During this discussion, Keith Blanchard voiced concern regarding the risks of declaring maturity too soon at the expense of consumer perception of the fruit and its desirability. Salvador Dominguez agreed with concerns about consumer experience, emphasizing the need to make sure that consumers have the best eating experience possible. This led to discussion of previous efforts at conducting taste tests.

Patton reiterated to the committee that when it comes to the regulatory requirements for CDFA, maturity standards are based on a minimum and not based on the perceived optimal taste or maturity as defined by the industry or taste tests. Patton also stressed that the industry should be cognizant of the potential pitfalls with separating maturity standards for fruit grown in the San Joaquin Valley and fruit grown elsewhere in the state.

### **ITEM 10: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS**

The next meeting will be held on September 14, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

Chair Schaap asked that there be more discussion of the GEM variety. Blanchard asked that this include discussion of GEM avocados being labeled as Hass.

**ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m. by Chair Schaap.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sam Santander", written over a horizontal line.

for  
Sam Santander, Program Supervisor  
Avocado Inspection Program  
Inspection and Compliance Branch