



**Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP)  
Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TASC)**

California Department of Food and Agriculture  
2800 Gateway Oaks Drive, Room 101  
Sacramento, CA 95833  
(916) 900-5022

**April 27, 2015  
8:30 PM to 2:30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**TASC Members**

Dr. Jerome Pier, Vice Chair  
Dr. Dennis Chessman  
Mr. Rex Dufour  
Dr. Eric Ellison  
Mr. Charles Hornung  
Dr. Doug West

**CDFA Staff**

Dr. Amadou Ba  
Mr. Mark Cady  
Ms. Brooke Elliott  
Ms. Natalie Jacuzzi  
Dr. Barzin Moradi

**Interested Parties**

Mr. David McEuen

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Dr. Jerome Pier called the meeting to order at 8:56 a.m. and welcomed the subcommittee. Dr. Pier acted as Chair because Mr. Jack Wackerman was not present. Dr. Marja Koivunen, Dr. Marc Los Huertos, Dr. Robert Mikkelsen, and Mr. Steve Spangler were also not able to attend the meeting. Self-introductions were made and a quorum was established.

**DEPARTMENT, DIVISION, AND BRANCH UPDATES**

Dr. Amadou Ba reported there is language about healthy soil in the governor's budget summary. The administration is planning several initiatives to increase carbon in soil and establish long-term goals for carbon levels in California agricultural soil. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is tasked to coordinate the healthy soil initiative.

Dr. Ba reported that the Organic Input Material (OIM) program has been accredited to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17065 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agriculture Marketing Services. This accreditation confirms the CDFA's OIM program is a reputable material review organization. In

response to an inquiry pertaining to the creation of the OIM program, Dr. Ba provided background information on the legislative history of AB 856 that was introduced in response to CDFA's investigation of an organic fertilizer manufacturer that was adulterating a liquid fertilizer with an unapproved ingredient. The main goal of AB 856 is to ensure integrity and composition of OIM products used for organic food and crop production in California. The new law filled gaps in CDFA's authority to regulate fertilizing materials used for organic food and crop production and provides CDFA enhanced enforcement authority to achieve compliance. Currently, more than 1200 OIM products are registered by the program and manufacturers of OIM products are being inspected. The program is funded with registration fees and mill assessments.

Between 2014 and 2015, eight California Crop Adviser (CCA) Nitrogen Management Training sessions were held. According to the California Association of Pest Control Advisers (CAPCA), 728 CCAs were trained. One more session will be conducted in 2016 to train the remaining 286 CCAs.

There are several new bills in legislature, but none have direct impacts on the industry. AB 1039 explains fertilizing material law violations, penalties, and how the program may collect fees. AB 1247 addresses all organic input material product sales and use tax. Currently, 90 percent of organic input materials are exempt from sales tax, according to the taxation code from the Board of Equalization. Guaranteed nutrient analysis makes the product a fertilizer, which is exempt from sales tax. Bulk soil amendments and auxiliary soil and plant substances with no nutrient claims are subject to sales tax. AB 300 is for establishing an algal bloom task force to reduce toxic cyanobacterial blooms and make recommendations on research funding. Proposition 1 will generate resources to fund research projects.

Mr. Charles Hornung asked for clarification about regulations and crop-specific nitrogen plans for growers in Central Valley. Mr. Mark Cady explained that coalitions will complete groundwater assessment reports this year, which must be approved by the Central Valley regional Water Boards. The assessment will help identify high-vulnerability areas for nitrogen problems. If crops are in high-vulnerability areas, then CCAs must sign nitrogen management plans for those areas. The planning of self-certification training for growers will begin this year. After growers complete the training and pass a test, they will be able to certify their own nitrogen plans. This training is specific to growers in the Central Valley.

### **REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES**

Dr. Pier requested the subcommittee review the minutes of the February 23, 2015 meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Charles Hornung moved to approve the minutes as submitted; Dr. Dennis Chessman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **UPDATE OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKING GROUP**

Dr. Barzin Moradi updated the subcommittee about the strategic planning working group meetings. In the last meeting, Mr. Parry Klassen explained the upcoming research to be done by the coalitions. According to a survey given at grower coalition meetings, 80 to 90 percent of growers prefer to have their CCAs and Pest Control Advisers (PCAs) sign their nitrogen management plans, a form that growers are required to submit to their regional Water Boards. The best way to reach out to growers is to provide them with concise, boiled-down research findings and simple take-home messages, as compared to technical research data.

The next working group meeting is May 7, 2015. Mr. Chris Rose, from the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program of the Central Coast Water Board, will provide insight about the required nitrogen management plans. A subset of growers in the Central Coast Region are required to report the total mass of nitrogen applied in fertilizers, amendments, and irrigation water for each specific crop grown. Mr. Rose will present a summary of the data and draft conclusions pertaining to grower nitrogen management planning and discuss how growers can be motivated to further refine nutrient management.

### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF 2015 SPECIAL PROPOSALS**

Dr. Ba explained the purpose of the Special Request for Proposals (RFP). CDFA is committed to finding a balanced approach to improving water quality, reducing nitrogen loading through education and outreach, and enhancing natural resources while sustaining agricultural productivity. To fund this goal, mill assessments have been increased to the maximum amount allowed by law. The FREP budget has been increased to include \$2 million for research and projects responsive to specific nitrate issues, which are addressed in the Special RFP.

Dr. Pier led discussion in reviewing the 21 proposals, and the subcommittee voted on every project after discussion of the merits.

Six proposals were selected for funding recommendation. Comments and suggestions were recorded to provide feedback to the project authors.

The project proposals recommended for funding approval are:

- *N Fertigation Education Modules and Updated Fertigation Book*  
Charles Burt

- *Developing a Decision Support Tool for Processing Tomato Irrigation and Fertilization in the Central Valley Based on CropManage*  
Daniel Geisseler
- *Quantifying N<sub>2</sub>O Emissions Under Different On-Farm Irrigation and Nutrient BMPs that Reduce Groundwater Nitrate Loading and Applied Water*  
Arlene Haffa
- *2015 Demonstration of a Combined New Leaf Sampling Technique for Nitrogen Analysis and Nitrogen Applications Approach in Almonds*  
Gabriele Ludwig
- *Evaluation of the Multiple Benefits of Nitrogen Management Practices in Walnuts*  
Parry Klassen
- *Train the Trainer: A Nitrogen Management Training Program for Growers*  
Parry Klassen

The FREP staff will send a letter to each of the project leaders informing them whether their proposal was selected for funding, pending the final decision of the Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board (FIAB) and the CDFA Secretary.

#### **AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

There were no additional items.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting to discuss and recommend 2015 regular full proposals is scheduled for June 10, 2015, at 9:00 a.m.

#### **ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** Dr. Pier moved to adjourn the meeting; Dr. Eric Ellison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Pier adjourned the meeting at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dr. Barzin Moradi  
Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)  
Fertilizer Research and Education Program

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Date