



**Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP)
Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TASC)
California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)**

University of California, UC Cooperative Extension
70 Cottonwood St., Woodland, CA 95695

4430 Ramada Drive, Suite B, Paso Robles, CA 93446 (Remote Location)

**June 6, 2022
9:00 AM**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Daniel Rodrigues
Dr. Jairo Diaz
Dr. Jerome Pier, Chair
Dr. Sebastian Saa
Dr. Tom Bottoms
Edgar Macias

MEMBERS ABSENT

David McEuen
Dr. Ben Faber
Dr. Jan Hopmans
Dr. Lisa Hunt
Dr. Rob Mikkelsen

CDFA STAFF

Dr. Emad Jahanzad
Jennifer Harmon
Maria Tenorio Alfred
Mark Cady
Nicole Nunes

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Jerome Pier, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. Introductions were made, and a quorum was established.

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES

Dr. Pier requested the subcommittee review the minutes of the March 8, 2022, meeting.

MOTION: Dr. Sebastian Saa moved to approve the March 8, 2022; minutes as written; Edgar Macias seconded. The motion passed by present subcommittee members with a vote of 6 - 0.

DEPARTMENT, DIVISION, AND BRANCH UPDATES

Mark Cady provided updates for the Division and Branch. Cady discussed the funding for CDFA's Office of Farm to Fork, which has many programs aimed at increasing access to healthy, locally grown food. These programs offer a variety of new grants to many organizations and businesses that address food insecurity.

Cady also discussed the upcoming Farm Bill. Food Safety, food systems, and nutrition programs are examples of where CDFA will be providing input.

CDFA's Executive Office will be releasing a Racial Equity Action Plan. CDFA hired a Farm Equity Advisor who consults within its divisions and programs, including grant programs and representation at the advisory board level. This Action Plan will review CDFA's hiring practices and representation on our boards and subcommittees, including what languages are represented and how well we reflect the diversity of our stakeholders.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Cady provided an update on the Nitrogen and Irrigation Initiative. FREP meets monthly with the University of California (UC) Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) and UC Davis to discuss the work progress (i.e., hiring new staff and training).

Doug Parker, UCANR's lead Principal Investigator (PI), will be retiring at the end of this month. His replacement in the Initiative, Dr. Sam Sandoval Solis, UC Cooperative Extension Specialist in Water Management, has been attending meetings and will participate as a co-co-PI on the grants. Dr. Sandoval has worked with Dr. Parker and the California Water Resources Institute on previous projects.

Nicole Nunes gave an update on the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Training Program for Grower Self-Certification. Nunes has been working with an Ad Hoc Committee to develop a self-study version of the training. The self-study training will be available to growers starting September 1, 2022.

At the last TASC meeting discussion ensued regarding the number of proposals submitted over the past few grant cycles. FREP staff conducted a series of interviews to determine the cause for decline and if improvements could be made to increase the submission of quality proposals. FREP staff interviewed individuals from the following four groups:

1. those that have recently received funding from FREP
2. those that have recently applied, but have not received funding
3. those that have not applied recently, but work in FREP priority areas
4. those that have a similar grant program structure and/or priorities

The interviews resulted in the following findings:

- FREP was not alone in low submission rates in the past few cycles among similar grant programs
- The funding cap should be increased from \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year
- The grant timeline should be moved up to allow more time for each step of the process

- The clearer and more concise the comments and suggestions are from the TASC the better it is for the researchers to incorporate these items in their grant proposals

Additionally, FREP will work on improving the Request for Proposals document and outreach efforts to increase submissions. The separation of research and outreach proposals is also being reviewed with the potential for having different evaluation requirements and funding caps for each type.

2022 REGULAR CONCEPT PROPOSALS

Dr. Pier led discussion in reviewing and voting on the four 2022 concept proposals submitted for funding.

- Irrigation and Nitrogen Best Management Practices in California's Low Desert Vegetable Production Systems: Assessing Drip vs. Furrow in Lettuce and Broccoli- *Montazar, A.*
 - Passed with a vote of 5-1 with caveats.
- The role of irrigation management for improving nitrogen use efficiency for broccoli grown with nitrate-contaminated irrigation water-*Decock, C., Cahn, M., Smith, R.*
 - Passed with a vote of 6-0 with caveats.
- Black Soldier Fly Frass: A Novel Organic Fertilizer and Soil Amendment-*Gebiola, M.*
 - Did not pass with vote of 0-6.
- Development of Precision Yield Monitor for Almond and Pistachio-*Brown, P.*
 - Passed with vote of 6-0 with caveats.

Letters will be sent to the PIs with the TASC's decision and comments this month. The proposals will be reviewed by the Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board later this month.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Funding level, timeline adjustments, and the possibility of splitting grant program priorities into research and outreach areas will be discussed at the next meeting. Recruitment and applications for new TASC members will also be discussed.

NEXT MEETING

FREP TASC Meeting Minutes

June 6, 2022

Page 4 of 4

The next meeting will be between mid-September into October 2022; dates will be sent via Doodle Poll.

ADJOURN

MOTION: Dr. Tom Bottoms moved to adjourn the meeting; Dr. Jairo Diaz seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:38 am.

Respectfully submitted,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY MARK CADY

Mark Cady

Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)

Fertilizer Research and Education Program

6/14/2022

Date