



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
AVOCADO INSPECTION COMMITTEE (AIC)
March 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes
Teleconference**

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

CDFA REPRESENTATIVES

Steve Patton
Stacey Hughes
Sam Santander
Thomas Osborn
Marcee Yount

MEMBERS ABSENT

Aaruni Thakur

INTERESTED PARTIES

Monica Arnett, CA Avocado Commission
April Aymami, CA Avocado Commission
Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia, UC Riverside
Ken Melban, CA Avocado Commission
Jessica Hunter, CA Avocado Commission
Eric Downs, Riverside County

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Salvador Dominguez, Chair.

ITEM 2: INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

Roll was called by Thomas Osborn. A quorum was established, and self-introductions were made.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Dominguez asked for a motion to approve the September 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented.

MOTION: Stewart Lockwood moved to approve the September 14, 2021 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

Sam Santander provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report.

ITEM 6: REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED CDFA YEAR 2022/23 BUDGET

Santander presented the Proposed CDFA Fiscal Year (FY) 2022/23 Budget. The proposed budget included \$195,693 for personal services; \$66,687 for operating expenses and equipment; a gas tax credit of \$4,980; and a pro rata cash adjustment of \$15,249 for a total budget of \$272,649.

Chair Dominguez asked for a motion to approve the CDFA Proposed Budget for the FY 2022/23 as presented.

MOTION: Stewart Lockwood moved to approve the Proposed CDFA FY 2022/23 Budget as presented. John Schaap seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with Bryce Bannatyne abstaining.

ITEM 7: GEM VARIETY RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia of the University of California, Riverside provided an update on the GEM variety research project. Because of a staffing issue with the statistician, suggested release dates will not be available until the end of March. It is anticipated that the release date will be late November to early December for the San Joaquin Valley and January to early February for Southern California for size 48 fruit with a 22.8% dry matter minimum maturity standard target. Once the statistician provides their report, the release date information will be forwarded to the Avocado Inspection Program (AIP) to share with the Committee.

Steve Patton suggested that the Committee meet before the fall in order to examine Dr. Arpaia's final results. The results could then be distributed when CDFA traditionally sends out the avocado release dates prior to the season starting in November.

Bannatyne voiced concerns about the 22.8% minimum maturity standard as feedback received on the quality of the fruit at this standard has not been ideal. Chair Dominguez reminded the Committee that this is the minimum maturity standard and is not the ideal maturity to harvest fruit.

Lockwood asked the handler members of the Committee what their ideal internal minimum maturity standard is. Members responded that they don't harvest or market their fruit unless it is at 27%. Dr. Arpaia stated that the GEM variety typically reaches 27% in the beginning of January for the San Joaquin Valley, late February for the south, and in March for north.

ITEM 8: PROGRAM UPDATES

Santander provided Program Updates. From November 2021 to January 2022, the AIP has certified 9,268,707 pounds of fruit; conducted 287 size and weight tests, with only two violations and 141 containers rejected; conducted 29 maturity tests, with only four violations and 2,775 pounds of fruit disposed of; and conducted 209 informational tests.

The AIP is currently fully staffed with three permanent inspectors and two seasonal employees. However, extra staff may be needed going forward to enforce new release dates for the GEM variety. The AIC may need to identify ways to expand enforcement as well if GEM acreage increases.

ITEM 9: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

Schaap asked that there be more discussion on how the AIP could enforce maturity for the two different GEM variety release dates and what resources would be needed.

The next meeting's agenda will include the GEM variety research project statistician's report. Keith Blanchard will also provide an update on the GEM variety regulation changes and price look-up process.

The next meeting will be held on September 13, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m. by Chair Dominguez.

Respectfully submitted by:

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