

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
(CDFA) ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING ACT SCIENCE ADVISORY  
PANEL**

California Department of Food and  
Agriculture Main Auditorium  
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814  
October 18, 2018

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Panel Members in Attendance**

Jocelyn Bridson, MSc, Rio Farms, (Chair and Member)  
Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch (Member)  
Clair Jahns, Natural Resources Agency (Filling in for Member Alvis)  
Emily Wimberger, CalEPA, ARB (Member)  
Vicky Dawley, Tehama RCD (Member)  
Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm (Member)  
Doug Parker, PhD. UC ANR (Subject Matter Expert)  
Tom Hedt, USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert)  
Scott Couch, State Water Resources Control Board (Member)  
David Bunn, PhD, Resources Agency, DOC, (Member)  
Jeff Dlott, PhD, SureHarvest, (Member)

**State Agency Staff and Presenters**

Scott Weeks, CDFA  
Guihua Chen, PhD, CDFA  
Ravneet Behla, PhD, CDFA  
Andrew Whitaker, PhD, CDFA  
Carolyn Cook, MSc, CDFA  
Thea Rittenhouse, CDFA  
Geetika Joshi, PhD, CDFA  
Amrith Gunasekara, PhD, CDFA  
Karen Ross, Secretary, CDFA

**AGENDA ITEM 1 – Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 10:09 AM by Chair Bridson. Introductions were made. Present at the meeting were all the members noted above under “Panel Members in Attendance.” CDFA Secretary Karen Ross attended the meeting and was introduced by Chair Bridson. Secretary Ross thanked the panel members for serving on the Science Advisory Panel and helping the California agriculture community in their efforts.

## AGENDA ITEM 2 – Previous Meeting Minutes

Chair Bridson, introduced the May 24, 2018 and July 19, 2018 meeting minutes. Given the lack of a quorum at the July 19, 2018, meeting, the May 24, 2018 minutes were presented at this meeting for approval. Member Bunn introduced a motion to accept the minutes provided by CDFA staff with Member Wimberger seconding the motion. The motion was approved by all members present and accepted without further changes.

## AGENDA ITEM 3 – SWEEP update

Carolyn Cook, MSc, of CDFA provided programmatic updates on the State Water Efficiency Enhancement Program (SWEEP). She noted that CDFA received \$20 million through the Proposition 68 bond for SWEEP and proposed that these funds should be dispersed through two solicitations. Ms. Cook also discussed the tentative timeline for next solicitation. She further updated the panel on the public comments received in July through September 2108 and noted that SWEEP received 11 letters through electronic mail. CDFA provided responses to the comments in a summarized format and these responses were available on the CDFA SWEEP website for public accessibility. Ms. Cook proposed a revised scoring criteria for SWEEP applications to be included in the next solicitation, which was accepted by the panel.

Ms. Cook further updated the panel on the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Request for Applications. She noted that CDFA received 28 applications and CDFA staff is evaluating applications for eligibility and qualifications.

Ms. Cook also reviewed new criteria for SWEEP Funding Priority. Several groups and geographies will receive funding priority in the upcoming SWEEP solicitation. This stems from the Proposition 68 bond funding which require consideration of Severely Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and the Famer Equity Act of 2017 which requires CDFA ensure funding access for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers. The panel member discussed the definitions of both criteria and asked for clarification on which groups would receive funding priority. Member Bunn inquired if LGBTQ farmers will receive priority through Socially Disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Thea Rittenhouse of CDFA responded that there is no such provision in the Farm Equity Act. Member Dawley suggested that CDFA should create multilingual training videos for technical assistance providers.

## AGENDA ITEM 4 – SWEEP Application Platform

Scott Weeks of CDFA provided a demonstration of the new application portal for SWEEP. He noted that the new application portal has the ability for one account holder to submit multiple applications which could be useful to technical assistance providers. The application process is streamlined through the elimination of multiple tabs and through the provision of active links for required information. Chair Bridson asked if the portal has the ability to send reminders to the applicants. Mr. Weeks responded that the portal has such ability. Dr. Parker asked if he portal allows the applicants to save the applications before submission and complete the application at later time. Mr. Weeks

responded that incomplete applications can be saved and could be completed at a later date.

Chair Bridson accommodated questions and comments from the public on SWEEP. One member of the public suggested the program should limit the cumulative SWEEP award to \$300,000 per applicant. Another public member sought clarity on the revised scoring criteria. A public member suggested that panel should consider CO2 enrichment as approved SWEEP practice. Dr. Parker suggested that there should a process to review and update the SWEEP-eligible practices. Chair Bridson suggested to add this as an agenda item for January 2019 meeting. Member Dlott supported the suggestion.

Member Cameron introduced a motion to accept all proposed program revisions from CDFA SWEEP staff. Member Couch seconded the motion and all members approved the motion to move forward on the staff recommendations of SWEEP.

#### AGENDA ITEM 5 – Healthy Soils Program Update

Dr. Geetika Joshi of CDFA provided updates on the Healthy Soils Program (HSP). She noted that \$10 million were made available through Proposition 68 bond funding and an additional \$5 million were appropriated through Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (California Climate Investment Program). These funds will be dispersed through one solicitation. Dr. Joshi proposed a tentative timeline for HSP. She noted that 32 new practices were suggested by the public. CDFA staff evaluated these practices and categorized these new practices into three groups 1) Recommended for inclusion into 2018 HSP Incentives and Demonstration Projects 2) Recommended for Inclusion in 2018 HSP Demonstration Projects with Research (Type A) and 3) Practices not recommended for inclusion.

Dr. Joshi provided an update on public comments received on the draft HSP Request for Grant Applications. She noted that 21 letters were received between July 25 and September 12, 2018. CDFA has provided responses to the comments in a summarized format and these responses are available on CDFA HSP website. She further provided information on the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Request for Applications and noted that 36 applications were received and are being evaluated for eligibility and qualifications. Panel member suggested that CDFA should invest in digital outreach and make technical assistance available on-demand.

The Science Panel received several comments and questions from the public. There were several comments in favor of and in opposition to the proposal of including nitrification inhibitors and slow release fertilizer practices into the HSP incentive program because they did not contribute to soil health and was not consistent with the legislative mandate. CDFA staff commented that the legislative mandate also notes practices that contribute the reduction in greenhouse gases. Members of the panel noted that a legal referral might be appropriate given the confusion and interpretation of the legislative language. A motion was made by Member Wimberger to move nitrification inhibitors and slow release fertilizers to HSP Demonstration Projects (Type A), research/data collection practices. Member Cameron seconded the motion. The

motion was accepted by all panel members.

#### AGENDA ITEM 6 – HSP Compost Application Ineligible Tool

Benjamin Nicholson of California Air Resources Board presented on a new Compost application ineligibility tool. He noted that per the HSP guidelines, compost application practice is only eligible for soils with organic matter content less than 20 percent. He further demonstrated the use of a map layer which can be used with Google Earth software. Chair Bridson asked about the spatial resolution of the soil map. Mr. Nicholson responded that resolution varies for soil type, for example, forest soils the grid size be bigger than farmlands. Dr. Joshi responded that if applicant thinks that map is inaccurate they may submit a soil test to be eligible for the compost application practice.

#### AGENDA ITEM 7 – HSP Application Platform

Dr. Guihua Chen of CDFA presented on the newly developed application portal for HSP. She noted that there are two separate web portals developed for HSP Incentive Program and HSP Demonstration Projects. Dr. Chen demonstrated the use of portals.

#### AGENDA ITEM 8 – Comet-Planner Update

Dr. Adam Chambers of USDA NRCS presented an update on Comet-Planner. He noted that Comet-Planner calculates the baseline, conservation practice impact and thus calculates the GHG reduction. He further noted the compost application has been included in the Comet-Planner.

#### AGENDA ITEM 9 – AB 2377 Technical Assistance Requirements

Dr. Amrith Gunasekara of CDFA presented on newly signed Assembly Bill 2377. Dr. Gunasekara noted that AB 2377 requires CDFA to establish a technical assistance grant program to provide funds to technical assistance providers for the Healthy Soils Program, Alternative Manure Management Program and State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program. He further noted that the new law requires a minimum 5% of the funds appropriated to these programs will be made available for technical assistance and maximum of up to \$5 million. CDFA will establish criteria and guidelines for technical assistance providers to qualify for these grants. Dr. Gunasekara further noted that CDFA will start developing guidelines and present to EFA-Science Advisory Panel more information on the new bill at the January 2019 meeting.

#### AGENDA ITEM 10 – Public Comments

Chair Bridson opened meeting for public comments. No additional public comments are made.

#### AGENDA ITEM 11 – Next Meeting and Location

Dr. Gunasekara stated that the next meeting will be on January 17, 2019, to cover HSP, SWEEP updates and programmatic technical assistance development of AB 2377 requirements. The location is not yet determined. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM by Chair Bridson.

Respectfully submitted by:



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Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.  
Liaison to Science Advisory Panel

January 17, 2019  
Date