

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

California Department of Food and Agriculture Auditorium
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

**July 16, 2020
9 AM to 3 PM**

Remote Access

https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oe/efasap/meetings_presentations.html

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Member in Attendance

Vacant (Chair and Member)

Jeff Dlott, SureHarvest (Interim Chair and Member)

Vicky Dawley, Tehama RCD (Member)

Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm (Member)

Michelle Buffington, PhD. CalEPA, ARB (Member)

Scott Couch, CalEPA, State Water Board, (Member)

Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch (Member)

Amanda Hansen, Natural Resources Agency (Member)

Leonard Diggs, Pie Ranch (Member)

Keali'i Bright, PhD, Assistant Director, DOC, Natural Resources Agency (Member)

Thomas Hedt, USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert)

Doug Parker, PhD. UC ANR (Subject Matter Expert)

State Agency Staff and Presenters

Carolyn Cook, MSc, CDFA

Scott Weeks, CDFA

Arima Kozina, CDFA

Geetika Joshi, PhD, CDFA

Amrith Gunasekara, PhD, CDFA

AGENDA ITEMS 1 and 2 – Welcome Remarks and Introduction of New EFA SAP members

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by Interim Chair Dlott. Dr. Dlott welcomed the panel members and introduced two new panel members appointed by Secretary Ross from CDFA and Secretary Crowfoot from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA). The new members were Mr. Leonard Diggs from Pie Ranch and Ms. Amanda Hansen, Deputy Secretary for Climate Change, from CNRA. Panel members introduced themselves. Present at the meeting were all the members noted above under “Panel Members in Attendance.” A quorum of at least six members was present at the meeting.

The meeting was conducted remotely, and members were able to call in and vote on action items in compliance with a recent Executive Order signed by Governor Newsom which allowed for remote attendance and additional flexibility in fulfilling Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Selection of Chair

Interim Chair Dlott reviewed the process for selecting a candidate for the vacant EFA SAP Chair position. He referenced the bylaws which describe the duties of the Chair position and welcomed motions from the members. Member Cameron nominated Interim Chair Dlott for the role of Chair position. Member Couch seconded the motion. All members unanimously voted in favor of the motion. Dr. Dlott will be Chair of the EFA SAP and will serve a three-year term. He expressed his pleasure and gratitude for the opportunity to serve in this position.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Minutes from January 21, 2020 meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2020 meeting was introduced by Member Dawley and seconded by Member Couch. Members Diggs and Hansen abstained from voting since they were new members and not present at the January meeting. All other members voted in favor of approving the minutes.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Stakeholder proposal to add an Organic Transition Plan to the Healthy Soils Program (HSP)

Interim Chair Dlott introduced the agenda item and noted that input is required further upon a presentation by CDFA. He noted that it was up to EFA SAP members to decide if they would like to vote today to move the action item or invite further written public comment following the meeting and vote to move the agenda item further at the next meeting.

The introductory comments were followed by a CDFA staff presentation. CDFA staff provided an overview of the proposal and identified several concerns about adding Organic Transition Plans to the Healthy Soils Program. Concerns include that the development of an organic transition plan does not have quantifiable greenhouse gas reductions and the proposed one-time payment for the plans can lead to reduced funds available for farmers and ranchers to implement HSP practices, setting precedent to cover planning costs which has not been done in CDFA's incentive programs. Other proposals related to plan development may be made in the future. Planning costs are expensive and will significantly reduce funds going to practices that are implemented by farmers and ranchers. Given this limitation, staff considered how CDFA can accommodate the request to include the organic transition plan and presented three options. Option 1) Include Organic Transition Plans as an allowable plan under the Conservation Plan category in the scoring criteria which provides up to 10 points out of 60 points total; Option 2) Include Organic Transition Plans as a dedicated plan which will be eligible for up to 10 points out of 70 points total. In both options 1 and 2, the Organic Transition Plan would not be funded through HSP, but its existence would provide the applicant with additional points awarded during technical review. Option 3) Consider the proposal to fund Organic Transition Plans through the CDFA Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Program. CDFA HSP staff recommended Options 1 and 2.

EFA SAP members posed several questions regarding the original proposal and the options proposed by CDFA. Can the awardee use of 25% advance payment towards the development of the plan? If a full or partial plan is required to apply to HSP, how would the options impact how Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers receive funding? What plans fit under the current conservation plan category included in HSP Request for Proposal (RFP)? Does the current HSP timeline allow for the verification of the Organic Transition Plan? Have other planning proposals been submitted? Can the payment for the plan can be lowered to \$2,000 from \$4,300 proposed? CDFA staff responded to the questions.

Interim Chair Dlott facilitated public comments following the discussion. A motion was made to

move the vote regarding the agenda item to a future meeting. Further,

- A written public comment period will be established prior to the next meeting.
- CDFA staff will evaluate Option 3 of the recommendations around the following topics:
 - Accountability – Assessing climate benefits and how these plans will be implemented
 - Payments – If payments can be staggered and a lower payment amount used with cost-share
 - Process – Ability to sub-contract with Technical Assistance Providers to reach farmers as part of the CDFA Technical Assistance Program
 - Timeline – Timelines and issues related to development of a plan and submittal, development of a plan and implementation, how the plans may fit into program timelines
- Establish a panel of experts on the plans for the next EFA SAP meeting to better understand the development, submission and certification of the plans.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – Stakeholder proposal to establish a SWEEP advisory subcommittee
Interim Chair Dlott introduced this action item. He provided the background that a stakeholder letter was submitted to CDFA requesting establishment of a Stakeholder Advisory Group to discuss important issues related to SWEEP.

Dr. Gunasekara proposed a process to establish an advisory group with an open solicitation announced through a CDFA news release. From the applications received, EFA SAP members could select members for the advisory group at the next meeting in October. He also fielded questions from EFA SAP members.

Questions from members included whether state agency staff will be allowed in the advisory group, the process for selecting members of the advisory group once applications are received, should there be specific expertise for the advisory group members, if a subcommittee is needed for these activities, if CDFA staff will support the meeting activities of the advisory committee, if the meetings will be open to the public and need to comply with Bagley-Keene requirements, if the meetings can be held virtually, and if EFA SAP members can be on the stakeholder advisory group.

Public comments were facilitated by Interim Chair Dlott. Following public comment, a motion was made by Member Hansen to move forward with the staff recommendation to establish an EFA SAP subcommittee on SWEEP. Member Couch seconded the motion. The motion was approved by all members present.

AGENDA ITEM 7 - State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program Updates

Mr. Weeks, Environmental Scientist with CDFA's SWEEP, provided an update on program outcomes from the latest solicitation. He also fielded several questions from the panel members.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – Healthy Soils Program Updates and New Practices Solicitation Update

Dr. Joshi provided an updated on the Healthy Soils Program and provided statistics on the most recent solicitation. She described the change to the solicitation of rolling review and awarding on a first-come, first-serve basis. \$22.2 million has been awarded to 319 projects. She fielded questions by the EFA SAP members.

Dr. Joshi also reviewed the process for submitting new practice proposals. OEFI is currently accepting proposals through August 28, 2020. New practice proposals must meet certain

requirements such as no proprietary products, submission of peer-reviewed literature including data on environmental impacts and data on co-benefits. CDFA will work with a technical advisory group to evaluate the proposals. Recommendations of the submitted new practices will be brought to the panel for further consideration after technical review.

Ms. Arima Kozima with CDFA provided an update on the Healthy Soils Initiative and upcoming workshops on partnerships opportunities in collaboration with the California Air Resources Board. Three workshops for investments and scaling up of practices are planned. Ms. Kozima then fielded questions from the members.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – Technical Assistance Program Updates

Ms. Cook provided an update on the Technical Assistance Program and fielded questions from the EFA SAP members.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – Public Comments

Interim Chair Dlott facilitated public comments.

AGENDA ITEM 11 – Next meeting and Location

Interim Chair Dlott announced that the next meeting will be held on October 15, 2020 and will have remote attendance. Dr. Gunasekara requested if the meeting could be made fully online without the walk-in option offered at this meeting since there was no in-person attendees at this meeting by members of the public. This effort will help manage Covid-19 concerns. The EFA SAP members unanimously agreed to support a remote attendance meeting only for the October meeting.

Member Couch introduced the motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Member Dawley. Panel members unanimously voted to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amrith Gunasekara", written over a horizontal line.

Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.
Liaison to the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel