

Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel Ad Hoc Advisory Group
Meeting 3, March 25, 2021

MEETING SUMMARY

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review & Meeting Summary Acceptance

Austin McInerny, CSUS Consensus and Collaboration Program (CCP) convened the final meeting of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group (AAG) of the California Department of Food & Agriculture's (CDFA) Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel (EFA SAP). AAG members signed in using a shared Google Sheet. A copy of the attendance is listed in [Attachment A](#) and the meeting recording is available for viewing [here](#). Mr. McInerny asked if there were any concerns about the previous meeting summary. He emphasized the importance of the meeting summaries as they will be included in the final report. There were no questions or concerns about the meeting summary posed.

Public Comment Opportunity

No members of the public asked to comment.

Review of Prioritization Exercise Outcomes

Mr. McInerny reported that 90% of AAG members voted in the prioritization exercise from meeting two. Recommendations which received 14 or more votes were pulled to be focused on in today's meeting. Four individuals from the AAG volunteered to review the recommendations and come up with refining questions. California Department of Food & Agriculture staff (staff) then refined those questions and those questions were sent out to the AAG to prepare for today's meeting. All recommendations were kept and will be included in the report. However, with limited time, it was important to focus the attention of the AAG on the highest priority recommendations.

Clarifying questions on Prioritization Exercise Outcomes.

- A question was asked about how the recommendations of this group will be reported to the EFA SAP.
 - The question was tabled to be discussed in Next Steps at the end of the meeting today.

Breakout Groups Report Out and Discussion

Group 1 Report Out

Group one refined recommendations suggested in meeting #2 which pertained to the question "SWEET's ability to help farmers improve water use efficiency. What is working well and what might SWEET seek to improve? How might SWEET evolve to help farmers address new resource management challenges?" The discussion was facilitated and reported on by Scott Weeks, CDFA and notes were taken by Zachary Peek in a shared Google document. The revised recommendations generated and supporting thoughts of the breakout groups are included as Attachment B1.

Group 1 Discussion

- (C)omment: Removing problem vendors is problematic as it requires CDFA to make a value judgement. Better to amend the recommendation a list of regional vendors to provide just information as to who is out there.
 - A suggestion to add grower reviews or links to reviews in the regional vendors list was generally accepted.

- C: Keep irrigation soil moistures generic in the recommendation “Allow Irrigation Water Management (IWM) systems to have 3 years of funding for the annual subscription.”
- (Q)uestion: Why is there only a recommendation for non-pressurized water supply in the recommendation “Allow for non-pressurized water supply to have the inclusion of a storage and compensation reservoir so that the farmer can capture the water on the intervals that water is delivered or diverted?”
 - There was no objection to remove reference to non-pressurized.
- Q: Does the recommendation “Develop a ‘Whole Farm’ criteria... Allowing for a consortium of farmers can result in a larger group savings of GHG” include haulers and packing houses?
 - The recommendation was revised to include “This would allow for packing houses, etc. to be included.”

Group 2 Report Out

Group two refined recommendations suggested in meeting two which pertained to the question “How might any future program improve participation by operations that have historically faced barriers in accessing or utilizing the program?” The discussion was facilitated and reported by Corin Choppin, CCP and notes were taken by Mr. McInerny in a Google Document. The revised recommendations generated and supporting thoughts of the breakout groups are included as Attachment B2.

Group 2 Discussion

- There was some discussion on the feasibility of the recommendation to translate the application into Spanish.
 - There was general agreement that creating the application in Spanish was infeasible and that translation of outreach materials needed to be the priority.
- There was some debate about whether new technologies should be supported or whether there needed to be more focus on training of current relevant technologies.
 - C: There was a suggestion to use the word encourage instead of require.
 - This change was accepted without objection.
 - C: Trainings already currently exist, CDFA needs to help applicants get access.
- There was some discussion of the recommendation “Pump test are not required to apply for SWEEP support, but would be required to receive funding if the project is approved.”
 - The recommendation was revised to include energy records with the pump tests.

Breakout Group 3 Report Out

Group three refined recommendations suggested in meeting two which pertained to the question “How might promotion and coordination of a program like SWEEP be improved with irrigation districts, groundwater sustainability agencies, USDA-NRCS and other potential partners?” The discussion was facilitated and reported out by Carolyn Cook, CDFA and notes were taken by Christine Gemperle in a Google Document. The revised recommendations generated and supporting thoughts of the breakout groups are included as Attachment B3.

Group 3 Discussion

1. Q: Should the first recommendation “The EFA SAP should coordinate with Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, irrigation and water districts, and California Air Resources Board to identify overall water conservation and GHG emissions reduction goals for SWEEP” be broadened to take in all water agencies or water delivery entities?
 - A: Water districts and Irrigation districts both apply and should be included.
 - Recommendation language was amended without objection.
1. Q: On the recommendation starting with “Instead of only one project budget category..” There was a question by staff if both the initial and revised recommendation should be voted on?
 - A: Breakout group members felt that the revised recommendation was sufficient.

- C: There was discussion about increasing the specificity of the language to the recommendation “CDFA should coordinate with Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to avoid incentivizing projects on land that will be fallowed due to Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.”
 - It was agreed to add to the recommendation that GSAs should thoroughly investigate and review before providing letters of support.
- There was some discussion on the recommendation for on-farm weather stations.
 - C: We need to maximize the benefit of our public network, it was created to provide irrigation management data and these farmers don't even know that it exists or don't want to use it. It is hard to justify a lot of money for a private station that only benefits one person.
 - C: Suggestion to put in a limit of around \$1,500 dollar a year.
 - C: Adjust recommendation to make funds unavailable for when there is publicly available data and require them to share weather data.
 - Staff will revise recommendation to include ideas that were put forward in the discussion.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Next Steps & Thanks for Service

Finalized recommendations from today’s breakout sessions will be uploaded into a survey tool in the next couple days. AAG members will then go through the recommendations using the tool to mark either strong support, moderate support, weak support, neutral or oppose. Mr. McInerny shared an initial outline for the final report and asked the group if they had any suggestions.

- Q: Can we include in the report timeframes, as determined by staff, for the implementation of recommendations?
 - Staff will look into whether it will be feasible to add timeframes into the final report for some of the recommendations where it will help bring clarity.
- Q: Include in survey tool a question clarifying AAG members role and as to whether the AAG member has worked with or provided support to under-represented farmers.
 - A: There was a similar question in the original AAG pre-meeting #1 survey and staff will look to see if it can be added to this survey as well.
- Q: Can we get more information from staff on the costs and feasibilities of these recommendations prior to voting on them?
 - A: We will work with staff and see what feedback we can provide. However there is a very short timeline to get this report generated by the next EFA SAP meeting.
- Q: Will dissenting comments be included?
 - A: Dissenting comments will be included, but not attributed, unless members specifically ask that their dissent be attributed to them.

The EFA SAP will be meeting on April 29th. Members of the AAG are encouraged to attend and speak about the report. Ms. Cook thanked AAG members for their interest in SWEEP and Mr. Weeks for his hard work. Mr. McInerny thanked Mr. Peek and Ms. Gemperle for playing a dual role of AAG member and note taker during the breakout groups.

The meeting concluded at 3:24pm.