CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

SEED ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, October 9, 2013, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

CDFA Plant Diagnostic Center
3294 Meadowview Road, Sacramento, CA

MEETING SUMMARY

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Introduction

Rick Falconer, Board Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. The purpose of this meeting was to explore industry seed service regulatory needs and brainstorm ideas to enhance the delivery of regulatory services and craft consensus recommendations for future action.

Due to lack of a quorum among Seed Advisory Board members present at the meeting, the group produced consensus recommendations but made no final decisions regarding advice to CDFA staff. At the outset of the strategic planning sessions, Rick Falconer introduced Rich Wilson as the facilitator from the Center for Collaborative Policy.

Review Agenda and July 1, 2013 conference call minutes

Chairman Rick Falconer reviewed the meeting agenda. The agenda was approved without any changes or additions. Approval of the July 1 conference call regular meeting minutes was tabled until the next SAB meeting due to lack of a quorum.

Seed Lab Tour

Deborah Meyer, Program Supervisor, led an educational tour of the Seed Science Lab for the group, presenting a range of information on the many lab processes and techniques used for evaluating seed quality.

The Seed Lab provides state regulatory services and a variety of specialty services to numerous clients such as seed labelers, seed growers, border station inspectors, USDA, and other researchers. The Seed Lab has highly trained staff and unique resources, including, among other things, the second largest seed reference collection herbarium in North America and a thermal gradient table to analyze temperature tolerance of germinating seeds. The skilled personnel and high quality facilities enable the Seed Lab to operate as a valuable resource for purity and germination tests, but also develop new testing protocols for the private and business sector, state/federal government agencies, and other nations.

Announcements

- Susan DiTomaso, Associate Director for the Seed Biotechnology Center (SBC), distributed the 2012 annual report for the SBC at University of California Davis.
- Nick Condos, Assistant Director for CDFA, provided an update on the recent investigation in Yolo and Sutter counties relative to a cucumber mosaic virus (first detection in the US) and bacterial fruit blotch (first detection in California) discovered in Yolo County and traced back to seed in Sutter County. CDFA has been collaborating with federal and county agencies and the industry to ensure the situation is under control.
- John Heaton, Senior Environmental Scientist of the CDFA Seed Services program, distributed an e-mail copy from the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) inquiring about federal lab shutdown effects on the industry. John Heaton encouraged industry representatives to respond to AMS' e-mail if they have feedback.

Report on Renewals, Seed Sales in FY 2013 and Collections

John Heaton, CDFA, provided an overview of the seed program's financial status, referencing a handout that summarized the Seed Services Program's Report of Collections and FY 2013 financial estimates.

Review County Survey Results

John Heaton, CDFA, summarized key findings from the survey on County Commissioners' perspectives on seed law enforcement and associated costs. Board members and other meeting participants provided feedback and identified additional key findings from the survey. One participant suggested that future surveys could focus on counties that have seed labelers. John Heaton noted that nine counties that do not have labelers chose not to participate in the survey.

Strategic Planning for Seed Services Program and Seed Laboratory

Attendees participated in a series of strategic planning sessions and interactive exercises to identify seed industry regulatory needs, brainstorm ideas to enhance delivery of regulatory services and collaborate to craft consensus recommendations based on the day's discussions. John Heaton provided context for the discussion with a brief history of the Seed Services Program.

Identification of seed industry's regulatory needs

Attendees identified seed industry needs and explored how these needs are addressed by the Seed Lab and Seed Services program. Several participants emphasized the interconnection among quality seed production, independent testing, effective regulations, and education. Outreach and policy involvement improves regulatory enforcement and consistent lab testing, which in turn supports industry's ability to provide reliable seed. Key points brought up during discussion included:

Present (and continual) industry needs:

- Bureaucratic and government
  - Effective regulation and enforcement – Regulation is the epicenter for the industry's integrity and ability to provide safe seed. Regulations can be improved with greater outreach/education and participation in forming policy.
  - Protection from invasive species and poor quality imports – Infrastructure must be able to competently respond to crises such as new invasive pests and/or diseases.
  - Improved bureaucratic processes – Industry productivity is hindered by overly complicated regulatory processes.
  - International presence and participation – California needs to be an active participant (attendance at the AOSA and ISTA annual meetings) in decisions regarding the establishment of international standards and other regulation development.
- Testing and technology
  - Reliable and consistent characterization of seed lots – Industry needs impartial entities that produce reliable and consistent test results.
  - Highly trained personnel – Institutions have well-trained staff to provide high quality services for seed testing, consultation, phytosanitary certification, etc.
  - Impartial resource for seed quality tests – Test results and evidence from a neutral party is important for enforcements as well as for mediation in dispute resolutions related to seed complaints.
  - Trained personnel succession – Improve recruitment of trained individuals for continuity in quality service.
  - Integrating new technology and research – CDFA needs to continuously explore new models to enhance standards, integrate the best available testing methods, and improve efficiency.
- Industry productivity

    - Facilitated seed transportation – Reliable test results and correctly labeled seed allows for uninterrupted seed movement.
    - Protection of industry integrity – Industry integrity needs to be maintained through consistent quality seed production and prevention of noxious weed contamination and dispersal.
    - Equal industry treatment and participation – All industry members should adhere to "rules of engagement" such as universal payment of seed licenses to ensure a fair voice in the industry.
- Outreach and Education
    - Improved awareness of CDFA and the Seed Lab's services – Industry participants may have unclear or incorrect perceptions of CDFA and what the Seed Lab does for the industry.
    - Greater understanding of the SAB's mission – Industry participants may not be familiar with SAB's role and responsibility. CDFA and SAB members should improve communication and advocacy of their respective roles, responsibilities and associated industry benefits.

CDFA services addressing industry needs:

- Regulation and enforcement
    - Collect regular seed samples
    - Ensure regulatory compliance
    - Collect registration fees
    - Assess high-risk situations to industry
    - Protect consumers and growers/farmers by ensuring accountability
- Technological expertise
    - Analyze seed quality
    - Develop testing protocols and participate with the Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA) and International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) research committee activities.
    - Develop sampling protocols and participate with the Association of American Seed Control Officials (AASCO)
- Support Industry
    - Serve as an impartial third party in dispute resolution
    - Provide third party quality assurance for other companies' Quality Assurance programs
    - Provide seed quality testing, seed identification, and seed sampling training workshops for industry
- Education/Outreach
    - Develop expertise on emerging issues such as invasive noxious weeds and protocols for sampling seed borne or seed transmitted diseases.
    - Conduct public outreach via use of educational tools such as seed identification keys

Improved delivery of regulatory activities

Following the identification of industry needs, coupled with a description of services provided by the Seed Services Program and Seed Lab, the group engaged in a brainstorm of ideas to enhance delivery of regulatory services. At the outset of the exercise, the group established criteria to objectively assess "what constitutes" a good idea. Criteria identified by the group suggested that ideas should create value, increase effectiveness and efficiency; be feasible, solutions-oriented, focused and sustainable over time; and be forward thinking to prepare industry to face future issues and challenges.

Several individuals support the idea of the Seed Lab becoming USDA and ISTA accredited, but some expressed concern as to the limited value these accreditations may bring for the CA seed industry. In general, the group agreed that education and outreach are central to improving the Seed Service program. Other key suggestions and concerns included:

- Review and prioritize Lab services – Due to limited resources, the Seed Services program needs to focus on which services and projects have highest priority. The Seed Lab should also review its fee for service programs and associated fees.
- USDA and ISTA accreditation –However, such accreditation may expand the Seed Lab's focus rather than narrow it.
- Lobby for reopening of the Federal Seed Lab in California. A West Coast Federal Seed Lab would be a huge asset for the industry in California when federal involvement is necessary to meet foreign export requirements.
- Improved education and outreach with stakeholders – Many industry stakeholders (e.g., seed companies, growers, and regulatory agencies) need a clearer understanding of regulations, CDFA and Seed Lab services, or the SAB. CDFA should engage in regular outreach to address these issues.
- Recruitment of new and committed Board Members – SAB needs to consider recruitment of new Board members to reflect the diversity of interests across industry, ensure broad knowledge of relevant issues and secure commitment to the ongoing role and responsibility of the SAB.
- Promotion of innovative thinking – More informal meetings allow for creative and productive brainstorming. New innovative models should also be explored to improve the industry.
- Elimination of policy constraints – Some restrictive policies interfere with CDFA's ability to collaborate with the industry.
- Incentives and training for experts – Consider incentives that might attract and retain experts in California. Ensure the presence of an RST training program.

The group then discussed ways to improve and enhance partnerships that support the seed program. Suggestions included the following:

- Collaboration with the private sector. Enhanced collaboration with the private sector can increase efficiency (e.g., sampling, testing and accreditations).
- Participation with industry associations. Greater CDFA presence at industry related meetings (e.g., California Seed Association (CSA), the American Seed Trade

Association (ASTA), Society Commercial Seed Technologists (SCST), and the International Seed Federation (ISF)).

- Training coordination. RST training and other types of workshops, potentially coordinated with institutions such as UC Davis and AOSA and SCST.
- Mechanisms that improve partnerships. Consider supportive tools such as physical examples and displays, student tours, and focus group meetings.

Recommendations

Following the aforementioned discussions, the group crafted consensus recommendations for consideration at the next SAB meeting:

- Recommendation: Consider a cost/benefit analysis for standard seed quality testing and laboratory accreditation.
  Objective: Determine if these services are relevant to California industry and which sectors of industry.
  Additional considerations:
    - Consider USDA and/or ISTA accreditation
    - Survey potential companies and customers
    - Gauge the market.
    - Concerns:
      - It will be important to know what tests and information other countries will accept. The Seed Lab and USDA accreditation does not address seed health issues.
      - Some people may be concerned with the effects on commercial labs that are already ISTA accredited.

- Recommendation: Develop SAB goals and objectives.
  Objective: Provide guidance and direction to SAB and improve effectiveness.
  Additional considerations:
    - Build on statutory charge and strategic planning outputs of the Seed Services program
    - Address Board rotation/membership and recruitment

- Recommendation: Enhance communication and collaboration with county agriculture commissioners (CAC) and local seed labelers.
  Objective: Improve stakeholder communication and the effectiveness of enforcement and compliance.
  Additional considerations:
    - Attend more regional CAC meetings
    - Utilize Board to conduct constituent briefings about the seed program
    - Increase awareness of seed program

- Recommendation: Develop flyers/brochures about seed services program to distribute with annual license renewals.
- Objective: Improve education/awareness about seed services funded by industry and associated benefits.
  Additional considerations:
    - Three components:
      1. Seed Services Program
      2. Seed lab services and/or activities
      3. Description of Board/List members

- Recommendation: Continue tracking lab activities and corresponding costs for Board consideration.
  Objective: Help the industry prioritize activities it does and does not support

- Recommendation: Develop more training programs for industry and other interested parties.
  Objective: Build human/technical capacity and expertise in the seed industry.
  Additional considerations:
    - RST training
    - Sampler training
    - Programs need to self-funded
    - Concern: new programs should not detract from the industry's current priorities

Public Comment

No comments were offered by the public.

Closing comments and next steps

Chairman Rick Falconer thanked attendees for their participation and acknowledged the amount of work they accomplished at this meeting. The group's agreed upon recommendations will be presented at the next Seed Advisory Board meeting on November 14.

Next Meeting:
November 14, 2013/8:15 a.m
Plant Diagnostic Center
3294 Meadowview Road
Sacramento, CA

List of Attendees:

Seed Advisory Board:
Rick Falconer
Paul Frey
John McShane
Bill White
Janice Woodhouse

Public:
Sue DiTomaso, SBC
Anne Megaro, State Senate
Betsy Peterson, CSA

Staff:
Riad Baalbaki, CDFA
Nick Condos, CDFA
John Heaton, CDFA
Susan McCarthy, CDFA
Deborah Meyer, CDFA
Robert Price, CDFA
Cathy Vue, CDFA

Facilitation Team:
Rich Wilson, CCP
Stephanie Horii, CCP

Respectfully submitted by:
John Heaton with assistance from the Facilitation Team.