

**California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)**  
**Minutes**  
of the Meeting  
of the California Fruit Tree, Nut Tree, and Grapevine  
Improvement Advisory Board (IAB)  
Held on Tuesday, November 19, 2024

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**Members Present:** Jeremy Bahne, Cliff Beumel, Richard Bostock, Issac Duarte, Jay Jensen, Eckhard Kaesekamp, Dan Martinez, Denise Moore, Reid Robinson

**Members Absent:** Matt McMillan, Nicholas Podsakoff

**OTHER ATTENDEES\***

Maher Al Rwahnih, Morgan Burke, Tanya Goodson, William Hazzard, Joshua Kress, Phuong Lao, Brenda Lanini, Jasmine Minhas, Cristian Munos, Kelley Paugh, Philippe Rolshausen, Kristina Weber

\*As self-reported in the Zoom application or sign-in sheet

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Reid Robinson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and welcomed everyone. Robinson reviewed the topics of discussion and conducted roll call. A quorum was present for the Board.

**RESEARCH PROGRESS REPORT PRESENTATIONS**

William Hazzard, UC Davis, presented a research progress report titled, "Identifying Potential Biomarkers for Non-Infectious Bud Failure." The goal of this project was to identify potential biomarkers for the purposes of screening for non-infectious bud failure in almond. Using previously identified differentially methylated regions, Hazzard reported a trend for a decrease in methylation as bud failure increases, but differences were not statistically significant. When analyzing gene expression at candidate gene sites using qPCR, Hazzard identified 20 differentially methylated regions between trees with and without bud failure. Gene expression levels had the strongest correlation between samples with similar levels of bud failure.

Philippe Rolshausen, UC Riverside, presented a research progress report titled, "Managing Trunk Diseases in Plant Nursery Stock." The goal of this project was to identify cultural practices that increase the quality of grapevine nursery stock by targeting grapevine trunk diseases. Analyses were finished for fungal grapevine trunk diseases but not for *Allorhizobium*. Virtually all vines produced had one or more fungal pathogens present, and callusing was the most susceptible stage during propagation. The most common fungal pathogens, *Fusarium* and *Phaeoacremonium*, were enriched in vines with high wood necrosis, and the most common biocontrol fungus, *Trichoderma*, was enriched in vines with low wood necrosis. When evaluating the efficacy of biological control treatments against trunk disease, Rolshausen found that biological control treatments applied during callusing increased plant biomass.

## **FOUNDATION PLANT SERVICES UPDATE**

Maher Al Rwahnih, Foundation Plant Services (FPS), provided an overview of results from the 2024 Classic Foundation Vineyard virus testing. Grapevine leafroll-associated virus 3 (GLRaV-3) was detected in a single vine for the first time in this vineyard. The infected vine was removed immediately, and surrounding vines will continue to be tested. Al Rwahnih presented evidence showing it was a recent infection.

In the Foundation Greenhouse Collection, Al Rwahnih reported a total of 1,195 clonal families in the greenhouse and 178 clonal families in propagation for the indoor collection. The building plans were completed for the Phase 2 screenhouse. Al Rwahnih stated that FPS funding from material sales and user fees were variable, and therefore they were seeking alternative sources for funding the Phase 2 greenhouse (including NCPN, IAB, PD/GWSS, PPA 7721, and private donors). Service awards from NCPN and IAB were noted as highly important to continue FPS operations and avoid staff layoffs.

Al Rwahnih described how FPS was moving forward with fruit tree tissue cultures. Two technicians at FPS were trained in use of cryotherapy to improve virus elimination in fruit trees. For quality management, Al Rwahnih outlined new tools for tracking and managing plant material – including an “intensive care unit” alert for plants and improved customer tools for online orders – and shared the recent hire of Ejay Dehal as Director of Production and Quality Assurance. Al Rwahnih announced acceptance of a Feature Article in Plant Disease on FPS’s approach to validating and seeking approval of HTS for quarantine and certification testing. The Board discussed potential funding sources for FPS.

## **CDFA PROGRAM UPDATE**

Kelley Paugh, CDFA, introduced herself as a new Senior Environmental Scientist for the Nursery Services Program and IAB Manager. Paugh also announced the hiring of two new environmental scientists, Morgan Burke and Harmanpreet Sharma, to Nursery / IAB Laboratory and Nursery Greenhouse, respectively. The Nursery Stock Nematode Certification Forum was introduced as an upcoming public venue for experts to propose new soil treatments for nematode certification. Paugh said that the CDFA Marketing Branch Grapevine IAB Assessment audit was still pending completion for one nursery. Regarding the Grapevine Registration and Certification (R&C) Program, Paugh stated that fees would be increased due to expenditures exceeding revenue. CDFA would also continue to request R&C sales records from Grapevine R&C participants to improve tracking of R&C materials. Paugh confirmed that the updated Deciduous Fruit and Nut Tree Regulations were still under review by CDFA. The Board expressed frustration that the Deciduous Fruit and Nut Tree Regulations had not been approved after 14 years of working on it and requested a timeline for when the updated regulations were expected to be approved.

## **PROGRAM BUDGET AND ASSESSMENT COLLECTION UPDATE**

Phuong Lao, CDFA, presented an update on the program's revenue and expenditures (attached). Lao reported that IAB revenue dropped from the prior year to present year by about \$500,000. FY 23/24 recently closed for CDFA, and total personnel services and operating expenses were currently at \$3,278,091. Total personnel services expenses dropped from \$522,963 in FY 22/23 to \$375,243 due to a direct cost recovery of \$151,084 to the Citrus Program for nursery lab staff assistance and supplies, as well as cost savings from staff turnover. Total cost recovery for Nursery Services was only \$280,000 in FY 23/24, with another cost saving derived from the new use of internal activity reports for staff time allocations. Lao provided an update on recent staff salary increases in FY 24/25. The Board requested information about the fund condition, and Lao explained that it was unchanged from the prior meeting.

## **REVIEW OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FY 2025-2026**

Paugh presented a draft Request for Proposals for FY 2025/2026 (attached). The Board expressed concern about the low fund condition. After discussion, the Board decided to postpone the Request for Proposals and not fund any research projects for the upcoming Fiscal Year.

### **Board Motion #1**

The Board recommended that CDFA not post a Request for Proposals for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 due to budget constraints.

Motion: Reid Robinson

Second: Cliff Beumel

In Favor: Jeremy Bahne, Richard Bostock, Issac Duarte, Jay Jensen, Eckhard Kaesekamp, Dan Martinez, Denise Moore

Against: None

Absent: Matt McMillan, Nicholas Podsakoff

Abstain: None

## **REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT EXEMPTIONS (3 CCR § 3070)**

Paugh presented the current assessment exemption list, as adopted in California Code of Regulations, Title 3, Section 3070 (attached). The Board reviewed prior discussions on exemptions for olive varieties and pistachio, and decided not to amend the exemption list at this time.

### **Board Motion #2**

The Board recommended no changes to the assessment exemption list (California Code of Regulations, Title 3, Section 3070).

Motion: Dan Martinez

Second: Reid Robinson

In Favor: Jeremy Bahne, Cliff Beumel, Richard Bostock, Issac Duarte, Jay Jensen,  
Eckhard Kaesekamp, Denise Moore

Against: None

Absent: Matt McMillan, Nicholas Podsakoff

Abstain: None

### **FORM 700 FILING AND REQUIRED TRAINING PRESENTATION**

Lao instructed the Board that the Form 700 must be filed annually, and Board Members will be penalized for late filing (after April 1). Board members need to file only once if they serve on multiple boards. Ethics and Sexual Harassment Prevention trainings must be completed every two years. Lao also reviewed the Form 700 filing policies for new and leaving Board members.

### **NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS**

The Board proposed the following agenda item for the next board meeting:

- New board member nominations (grapevine)

The next regularly scheduled IAB meeting was tentatively scheduled in Spring 2025.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Robinson adjourned the meeting at 1:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelley Paugh, Senior Environmental Scientist

Nursery Services Program

California Department of Food & Agriculture