

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)
Minutes
of the Meeting
of the Seed Advisory Board (SAB)
Held on Wednesday, November 10, 2021

SEED ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Members Present: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Members Absent: John McShane

OTHER ATTENDEES*

Riad Baalbaki, Cheryl Blomquist, Ha Dang, Jovan Djordjevic, Donna Boggs, Jill Hagenston, Tom Hearne, Adam Holmes, Juan Koponen, Imtiyaz Khanday, Umesh Kodira, Emi Kuroiwa, Brenda Lanini, Bill Matthews, Erica Moore, Robert Price, Allen Van Deynze, Connie Weiner, Hana Yokoyama-Hatch, Chris Zanobini

*as self-reported in the Zoom application or sign-in sheet

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Greg, Cassel, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. and conducted roll call. A quorum was present for the Board.

NOMINATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nomination Committee (Bill White, Greg Orsetti, and John McShane) met on November 4, 2021 via webinar to discuss applicants for two vacant SAB positions. The Committee recommended Tom Hearne, L.A. Hearne Company, be nominated for the vacant agricultural seed labeler position and Justin Davis, Sakata Seed, be nominated for the vacant vegetable seed labeler position.

Bill White moved for the board to accept the committee's recommendation and nominate Tom Hearne and Justin Davis for the vacant positions. Greg Cassel seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board recommended appointment of Tom Hearne and Justin Davis to fill vacant positions on the Board, effective April 1, 2022.

Motion: Bill White

Second: Greg Cassel

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

SEED BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTER REPORT

Jovan Djordjevic and Allen Van Deynze presented the Seed Biotechnology Center (SBC) report. The SBC team was composed of Van Deynze as the Director, Djordjevic as the Education Director, Intiyaz Khanday as the Research Director, Whitney Lowe as Program Rep, Phyllis Himmel managing the Collaboration for Plant Pathogen Strain Identification (CPPSI), and one open position for another Program Rep.

The SBC's mission is to act as a liaison for the seed and plant breeding industry and University of California through education, outreach, and research. Djordjevic led on the topic of education. The SBC created tailored courses for the seed industry and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by converting courses to an online setting, both by redoing old content and innovating new content to offer. The training included content for the United States, Europe, and Africa, involving plant breeding, seed production, hybrid breeding, and statistical and experimental designs, many of which were online with advanced courses being in-person. The flagship program was the Plant Breeding Academy, with upcoming in-person trainings. Outreach had also heavily transitioned to online, with Van Deynze having spoken at many conferences and online talks. He has also been active on three different committees (ASTA, CSA, and CPPSI), and supporting a group out of Indonesia looking to imitate the SBC. The Seed Central Express had been online for two years, allowing expansion to a much bigger audience. Van Deynze stated that the innovator showcase would return to in-person to show what was coming up in the industry, allow for connections and grants, and facilitate talks by UC Davis faculty. Himmel's program had connected pathologists across the globe for a uniform vocabulary in plant pathology. Van Deynze went on to discuss the SBC's contribution in research. In the last 3 years, they had published 21 research papers. The Kent Bradford endowment was currently at \$1.75 million to support research programs. Van Deynze proposed the SAB help to meet the endowment goal of \$2 million by contributing \$150,000.

Van Deynze stated that the SBC benefits California, working on CA issues in crops and training programs to continue to develop people and the needs of the industry. The SBC continues to be responsive to the industry needs. Van Deynze explained the finances of the SBC, on average a \$4.3 million program with a 17.5% return on investment. Board members discussed the possible results of AB20 and decided to adjust funding for indirect costs as needed, in the meantime proposing to maintain the status quo of \$250,000 per year funding from the SAB for the next 3 years. The

California Seed Association provided a letter of support for the funding of the SBC by CDFA and the SAB.

Van Deynze outlined the future of the SBC: to continue to innovate. For education, to continue to work with stakeholders to develop and deliver professional training classes relevant to the CA seed industry, in-person and online. For outreach, to be a scientific voice for the CA seed industry globally and attract new talent and companies to benefit the CA seed industry. For research, to continue to work with stakeholders to bring cutting edge, problem solving, relevant research to the CA seed industry.

Kraig Kuykendall moved for the board to approve and accept the report from the SBC. White seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board voted to approve and accept the report from the UC Davis Seed Biotechnology Center as presented.

Motion: Kraig Kuykendall
Second: Bill White

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

Greg Orsetti moved for the Board to recommend continued funding of the SBC of \$250,000 per year for a new three-year agreement, and stated that if additional overhead is required as part of this agreement that the Board should revisit the motion and consider amending the recommendation as needed to offset the resulting reduction of funds received by the SBC. Scott Emanuelli seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board recommended funding the UC Davis Seed Biotechnology Center at an amount of \$250,000 per year for three years, starting in fiscal year 2022/23.

Motion: Greg Orsetti
Second: Scott Emanuelli

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None
Abstain: None
Absent: John McShane

SEED SERVICES PROGRAM ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Brenda Lanini presented an update on the activities of the Seed Services Program. The program was fully staffed as of January 2021. Due to the increased collecting of samples starting in late February, there was an resulting backlog at the Seed Lab for the end of the FY; the program would work to ensure this issue did not continue moving forward.

The number of registered seed firms was down from the previous fiscal year (FY). As of October 1, 2021, 524 firms had registered to sell seed. Total income from registration fees, late fees, and assessments was \$2,103,760. Out of the \$200,000 of unclaimed gas tax (UGT) funds budgeted for the Seed Law Enhancement Program (SLEP): \$180,000 was used to fund increased label reviews, facility inspections, and paperwork by county inspectors, and \$2,000 was used to purchase updated seed sampling equipment for the counties. Some additional funds were used by the Seed Services Program to conduct county trainings, and any unused funds were rolled over to future years.

Lanini continued the discussion of changes in lot and associated labeling of coated seed from the previous meeting. She was working with affected industry members to find a clear path going forward and ensure consistent compliance for coated seed labeling. Lanini also noted a recently developing issue of treated seed being insufficiently labeled, both for agricultural and vegetable seeds. Lanini theorized that with the recent increase in seed demands, there has been a rush with seed packaging and shipping leading to labeling errors. She also discussed the ongoing difficulty with noncompliance by online seed sellers. And she stated that the program was continuing to do seed assessment auditing to keep a level playing field for the seed industry. The Board complimented the program's staff and their work with the industry to come into compliance.

White moved for the board to approve and accept the report from the Seed Services Program. Kuykendall seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board voted to approve and accept the Program Activities Update from the Seed Services Program.

Motion: Bill White
Second: Kraig Kuykendall

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

SEED SERVICES PROGRAM BUDGET AND FUND CONDITION

Brenda Lanini presented the FY 2022/23 Proposed Budget and Fund Condition for the Seed Services Program. Lanini noted that expenditures were low in FY 2020/21 due to vacant positions, temporarily reduced wages, and reduced travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These costs were projected to increase in FY 2022/23 with full staffing and increased ability to travel, increased IT support costs due to broad implementation of teleworking, and pay reductions ending. Most other budget lines were projected to remain stable. The total proposed budget for FY 2022/23 was \$2.31 million. Lanini noted that the additional \$60,000 for the seed industry study recommended by the SAB at the prior meeting was not yet accounted for on the budget sheet. For the Fund Condition, the FY 2020/21 starting reserve balance was at \$1,666,737, and the trust fund remained stable.

The Board asked about using some of the outstanding reserve balance to support the Bradford Endowment at UC Davis. Cassel moved for the board to request the Seed Services Program to investigate the authority and mechanics of making a contribution to the endowment and report their findings at the next meeting. White seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board requested that CDFA investigate the authority and mechanics for making a contribution to the Bradford Endowment at UC Davis from the Seed Services Program reserve, and to report these findings to the Board at its next meeting.

Motion: Greg Cassel

Second: Bill White

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

Chris Zanobini noted the costs of the CDFA Seed Lab in the budget, and stated that the CDFA Commercial Feed Regulatory Program used private laboratories. Zanobini mentioned that Assembly Bill (AB) 866 included a provision to allow for CDFA to

authorize private laboratories to test regulatory seed samples, and noted that the bill was on hold.

Kuykendall moved for the board to accept the proposed budget and fund condition as presented. Greg Orsetti seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board recommend a proposed spending plan of \$2,314,826 for FY 2022/23 for the Seed Services Program, as presented.

Motion: Kraig Kuykendall

Second: Greg Orsetti

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

SEED LABORATORY ACTIVITIES

Riad Baalbaki gave an update on activities for the CDFA Seed Laboratory. Baalbaki noted that the number of samples submitted and processed for label compliance testing this year was below target, and that there was a large increase in samples received in the fourth quarter of FY 2020/21, leading to delays in sample processing turnaround time, from the average of 32 days up to 60 days.

Label violations for FY 2020/21 were within historical ranges; restrictions during the pandemic did not lead to a marked increase in labeling violations, contrary to what was expected. The most common violation was incorrect labeling of purity percentage.

The lab's other activities included:

- Receiving and processing service samples
- Noxious weed detection and identification
- Authoring and co-authoring changes to rules and protocols on seed testing for submission to AOSA
- Consultations for experimental test designs of other labs
- Seed identification requests from other labs
- Analyzing the data collected in the Seed Testing Lab Uniformity Study conducted by the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) and the Association of American Seed Control Officials (AASCO)

The results of the Seed Testing Lab Uniformity Study, a formal study on the variability of seed lab testing results, showed large inconsistencies in the results between the same tests performed on uniform samples by the different seed labs across the United States. Baalbaki stated that the results showed a need for more uniformity between seed labs in both testing protocols and reporting requirements. ASTA, AASCO, and the Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA) were working to find solutions for issues identified, with the CDFA Seed Lab leading follow-up actions.

Board members and Baalbaki discussed the turnaround time of samples in the seed lab. Lanini emphasized the lab's status as a regulatory lab, which has a duty to be more thorough than a commercial lab. Emanuelli and Greg Cassel voiced concern over the length of turnaround time in relation to the ability to take regulatory action, with emphasis on financial costs compared to the perceived number of samples ran through the lab. Cassel proposed the idea of challenging the current model. The discussion ended on the conclusion that though the seed lab turnaround days have improved in the last few years, there could be continued improvement and increased efficiency within the lab, either through newer equipment or increased staffing. Umesh Kodira encouraged board members to tour the seed lab and to continue this discussion.

White moved for the board to approve and accept the report from the seed laboratory. Emily Clay seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board voted to approve and accept the report from the CDFA Seed Laboratory as presented.

Motion: Bill White
Second: Emily Clay

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

UC DAVIS SEED INDUSTRY STUDY

William Matthews provided an update on the UC Davis Seed Industry Study. He noted the complexity of the California seed industry and how that will prove a challenge to the study. He planned to use all available resources to ascertain the value of the seed industry in California. Matthews emphasized the value of privacy and reassured that confidentiality will be a priority in data collection, but noted the need for accurate data in order to give an accurate assessment.

Orsetti moved for the board to approve and accept the report on the seed industry study from UC Davis. White seconded. There was no further board discussion or public comments.

Board Motion

The Board voted to approve and accept the seed industry study report from UC Davis as presented.

Motion: Greg Orsetti

Second: Bill White

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: Mike Campbell, Greg Cassel, Emily Clay, Scott Emanuelli, Kraig Kuykendall, Greg Orsetti, Robert Simas, Bill White

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: John McShane

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The Board proposed the following agenda items for the next meeting:

- UC Davis Bradford Endowment funding
- CDFA Seed Lab funding
- SBC report
- CDFA Seed Lab report
- UC Davis seed industry study update

The next meeting was tentatively set for Wednesday, May 18, 2022. It was requested to hold the meeting at the CDFA Seed Lab, if allowable based on CDFA rules and status of the pandemic.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Erica Moore, Associate Governmental Program Analyst

Seed Services Program
California Department of Food & Agriculture