

Cross-Commodity Advisory Council

Terms of Reference (Updated: March 2024)

Context

In November 2021, B.C.'s Ministry of Agriculture and Food released *The Path Forward: A Blueprint for B.C.'s Tree Fruit Industry*, also known as the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan (TFISP or the Plan). The Plan provides 19 recommendations (and a 20th that was established during implementation) intended to contribute to the long-term stability of BC's tree fruit industry and mitigate any impacts on the wine grape industry.

An industry based Steering Committee, led by the Ministry, guided the development of the Plan and the processes, engagement, and consultations that informed it. The Steering Committee and various sub-committees have been actively implementing the foundational recommendations in the Plan since January 2022.

While the work is not complete, enough progress has been made that the Ministry and industry have determined it is time to transition leadership for the ongoing implementation and sustainability of the work to industry and have endorsed a Leadership Transition Plan to fully transfer that responsibility on April 30, 2024.

The Stabilization Plan recommended a new industry agency (governed by board members from key industry associations and independent members with relevant skills) be established to provide cross-sector leadership, governance, and strategic direction. While there was not enough support from industry partners to proceed with this recommendation as stated, they have agreed to collaborate under the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project (CCLSP, www.crosscommodity.org) to demonstrate the value of shared leadership and cooperation and determine the best long-term approach and structure to support this.

The CCLSP is managed and delivered by a Partners Table of five industry groups: the BC Cherry Association, BC Grapegrowers' Association, BC Fruit Growers' Association, BC Wine Grape Council, and Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program. Two full-time CCLSP staff provide the capacity to make meaningful progress on cross-commodity issues and opportunities.

There are three types of ongoing activities associated with the Plan:

- those being led through a Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project,
- those being led by the Ministry (e.g., outstanding decision regarding the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Fund), and
- those being led by an alternative industry-based approach (i.e., orderly marketing of BC apples).

These Terms of Reference outline the role of the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council (Advisory Council) for all three types of activities.

Vision

The Vision of the Advisory Council is that British Columbia has strong and vibrant tree fruit and wine grape sectors that are world leaders in environmentally sustainable and profitable production, the agricultural lands and the people that grow food are valued by communities, and our agricultural capacity is protected for future generations.

Mission

The Mission of the Advisory Council is to be a trusted source of expertise and knowledge for the tree fruit and wine grape sectors, providing balanced and considered advice to the Partners Table, the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project, and other relevant initiatives that emerge.

Goals

The goals of the Advisory Council are:

- To provide a regular forum for inter-agency coordination and collaboration on cross-commodity issues and opportunities.
- To build and strengthen partnerships between agricultural stakeholders.
- To improve relationships and information sharing between industry and governments.
- To help to avoid competition for resources such as funding and staff.
- To raise the profile of agriculture through coordinated and consistent messaging and enhanced communications.
- To guide a process to determine an appropriate cross-commodity governance structure, including developing a funding model, and obtain industry support for its implementation.

Function

In the short-term, the Advisory Council's responsibilities relate to ongoing activities that were initiated during implementation of the Stabilization Plan. Advisory Council members will be responsible for voting on the allocation of TFISP funds until fully committed; reviewing progress reports, final reports, and other deliverables for TFISP funded projects; and recommending payments from IAF in alignment with Contribution Agreements.

On a regular, ongoing basis, the Advisory Council will provide guidance and input on initiatives being led through the CCLSP:

- In the short term, this includes work on long-term leadership, domestic labour, extension services, and new apple varieties.
- In the longer-term, this could include work on climate resiliency, data management, local government engagement, innovation and technology, and communications. The Advisory Council will use its collective expertise to identify issues to work on together.

Occasionally and as requested and/or in the best interests of the industry, the Council will support and provide guidance to initiatives being led by other entities, including:

- Those being led by the Ministry (i.e.: data strategy, domestic apple marketing strategy, national retail code of conduct, allocation of the remaining amounts in the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Fund).
- The work on orderly marketing of BC apples being led through an alternative industry-based approach.

- Other relevant activities or programs managed by industry or the Ministry that emerge and are relevant to cross-commodity efforts.

While most of its work will be on cross-commodity issues, the Advisory Council may also work on commodity-specific activities, especially if those activities will reduce negative impacts on other commodities.

Funding and Resources

In the short term, the work of the Advisory Council will be supported by the CCLSP, which is funded by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Fund administered by the BC Investment Agriculture Foundation.

A thorough process must be undertaken to demonstrate the value of collaboration to industry, identify the best approach and structure for long-term cross-commodity collaboration (i.e., new organization, change mandate of existing organization, or something else), and determine the funding mechanism.

The Partners Table will lead this process with support from the Advisory Council. This work will begin as soon as practical.

Staff of the CCLSP will provide administration (agendas, minutes, etc.) and leadership for the Advisory Council.

Membership

Membership of the Advisory Council will aim to reflect the perspectives of the tree fruit and wine grape industry associations, supply chains, government, consumers, and retail. Members shall be appointed for one-year terms. A member having to resign before the end of their term may nominate a successor appointee to complete their term, subject to approval by the Advisory Council.

Member organizations may include:

- BC Cherry Association
- BC Fruit Growers' Association
- BC Grapegrowers' Association
- BC Wine Grape Council
- Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food
- Fruit packer organizations
- Local governments
- Grower members at large

Each member organization will be invited to designate one representative, and one alternate, to the Council. A member may opt to leave the Advisory Council at any time. A new member organization may be added to the Advisory Council if most of the members determine this would be in the best interest of the tree fruit and wine grape industries.

In addition, Partners Table members are invited to participate in all Advisory Council meetings.

Members will elect a Chair and Vice Chair from among the membership at the first regular meeting of each calendar year, or as necessary to fill a vacancy.

Procedures

The Advisory Council will operate under the following procedures:

- The Advisory Council will meet quarterly, or at the call of the Chair.
- A majority of members must be present to constitute quorum.
- The Advisory Council will operate on a consensus basis. Members are expected to share common values respecting the importance of agriculture and have a responsibility to ensure everyone is heard and decisions are based on the best possible alternative.
- The Chair will ensure proposals and decisions being considered are well understood by everyone, that all objections or reservations have been heard before affirming that agreement has been reached or calling for a vote.
- Objections may be registered in the minutes through:
 - Reservations or Non-Support* – the member disagrees with the decision but will not stop the group from supporting it.
 - Request for Postponement* – if a member strongly objects to a decision, they may request the Chair to postpone action on the item for a time agreed to by the Advisory Council, to allow for a period of negotiation and sober second thought. Following the postponement period and additional Council discussion, the group may move forward with a decision based on majority opinion.
- Members are required to disclose real or perceived conflicts of interest with any items on the agenda at the beginning of each meeting.
- To avoid a conflict of interest, any member of the Advisory Council who brings forward an application for the TFISP fund must leave the room for discussion and decision on the application.
- The Advisory Council may form subcommittees to assess and report on specific issues.
- Members that are staff in an organization should be compensated by that organization.
- Members who are in volunteer roles in their organization (e.g., volunteer board members) will be reimbursed for their time.
- All members will be reimbursed for their travel expenses, if any, incurred if participating on the Advisory Council.

Code of Conduct

Each members agrees:

- To represent the interests of the entire industry and not any member's organization.
- To actively support collaboration, including collaboration with governments.
- To participate fully, proactively, respectfully, and with an open mind.
- To bring concerns to the Advisory Council for discussion before addressing them elsewhere.
- To communicate within their respective organizations and networks.
- To respect timelines and honour commitments and hold each other accountable for fulfilling personal and organizational obligations (to ensure collective success).
- To support a transparent process of public communications as described in this Terms of Reference.
- To respect that some information shared in Advisory Council meetings is confidential (e.g., reflecting personal opinions) and not to be shared with others outside the group.
- To participate on or lead sub-committees, as necessary.

Communications Protocol

The Advisory Council may communicate with the public in the following way:

- The Chair may speak to the public on behalf of the Advisory Council.
- In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair may speak to the public on the Advisory Council's behalf.
- The Chair may designate another member to act as spokesperson on a particular issue.
- Individual members must not communicate on behalf of the Advisory Council, except as noted above.
- Members must clarify that they are not speaking for the Advisory Council when they speak for themselves or their organization on a Council-related issue.

Advisory Council members and their organizations will play an active role in communicating within the industry and building a proactive, positive, and cooperative approach to implementation of the Advisory Council's work.

This will include helping their board of directors, staff, and members to understand, support, and participate in the work of the Advisory Council, and taking advantage of opportunities to inform producers, packers, and organizations, build public support for the work of the Advisory Council, and dispel misinformation.