

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **Innovation & Technology Committee** meeting held virtually via MS Teams on April 23, 2024.

Members Present:

Felix Egerer
Gail Nelson
Karen Yeung
Kate Durisek
Kathy Malone
Kellie Garcia (CO-CHAIR)
Lindsay King
Nick Ibuki
Sarah O'Brien
Shelby Austen
Steve Brown
Sukhpaul Bal

Unsworth Winery
BC Fruit Growers' Association
Independent
BC Wine Grape Council
Hillside Winery
Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
Summerland Varieties Corporation
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
Independent
BC Cherry Association

Regrets:

Galen Barnhardt
Gayle Krahn
Hank Markgraf
Lisa Wambold
Molly Thurston
Raj Gill

Monte Creek Winery
Terralink Horticulture
Syngenta Canada Inc.
Terralink Horticulture
Pearl Agricultural Consulting
Cohort Wholesale

1. WELCOMING REMARKS

1.1 MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO CROSS-COMMODITY LEADERESHIP SUPPORT PROJECT

- K. Garcia introduced the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project to the committee members, offering an update on ongoing initiatives. The CCLSP aims to build on the recent Ministry-led efforts, such as the [Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan](#), by building industry leadership.

2. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

- K. Garcia reviewed the TOR for the committee.

3. ELECTION OF INDUSTRY CO-CHAIR

- This item was pushed to the next meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED
All Members	Elect an industry co-chair at the next meeting on June 5, 2024.

4. MEMBER ROUND TABLE UPDATES

- Not all members shared round table updates.
- K. Durisek briefed the committee on BCWGC's collaboration with UBC to create climate models for identifying grape varietals suited to the region's changing climate amidst the recent cold events. The aim is to eventually integrate these models into the BC Decision Aid System to support grape cultivation.

- L. King briefed the group on her ongoing funding efforts for the BC Decision Aid System. Funding is set to expire by the end of 2024. Initially supported by OKSIR, the system has since received funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The OKSIR General Manager is currently preparing a letter to request a four-year extension of funding from the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Plant and Animal Health Department. If external DAS funding is secured, the committee proposed using existing TFISP funds to investigate DAS expansion to other commodities, such as grapes.
- G. Nelson updated the group on BCFGA's efforts to revitalize their Horticulture Committee, focusing on overarching concerns such as crop protection, climate resilience, and innovation. Their mandate includes contributing to industry research, so they are currently in the process of defining their priority list and establishing long-term strategies.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 OVERVIEW OF TFISP FUNDING STREAM

- K. Garcia reviewed the TFISP funding stream in detail.
- CCLSP will assist individuals in drafting and submitting all applications. These applications will be reviewed and recommended for funding by the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council before being forwarded to IAF. Funding will be allocated to industry associations, with individuals or private consultants ineligible. While applications with a cross-commodity approach are preferred, commodity-specific proposals are still eligible for consideration.
- The committee decided they would like to establish clear priorities and guiding principles to help make decisions on projects to support for funding. It was discussed that funding should prioritize new technologies aimed at advancing the sector, rather than focusing on best management practices. Projects that support the scaling up of technologies across sectors may also be prioritized. To achieve tangible results, the committee will concentrate on short-term projects spanning one to two years.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED
K. Garica/S. Austen	Research SFU's BC Centre for Agritech Innovation and identify possible collaboration opportunities.
K. Garica/S. Austen	Develop a one-pager for committee priorities and project eligibility.
S. Austen	Send 2024 extension roadmaps to committee members.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR 2024

- The committee discussed 2024 priorities in detail, emphasizing that new technologies should be readily accessible to producers within a short timeframe.
- S. Bal suggested that considering recent cold damage, the committee should prioritize spray technology to safeguard winter buds. Highlighting a cross-commodity approach, he noted that this technology could benefit both cherries and wine grapes. Additionally, to decrease dependence on labour, he recommended exploring the use of drone technology for cover sprays. S. Brown shared that he has valuable local contacts in the drone technology sector who are industry leaders.
- K. Yeung noted that she would like to see an increase in technology to estimate crop yields and increase accuracy, especially with the recent climatic events.
- The group emphasized the need of a centralized horticulture dashboard, to enable growers to access resources conveniently. This platform could address the existing gap in basic horticultural knowledge.
 - S. Brown stressed the significance of addressing fundamental issues like pocket gophers before prioritizing investment in cutting-edge technologies.
 - K. Yeung highlighted the importance of disseminating information effectively, particularly regarding unsuccessful trials in the region, to prevent producers from encountering additional setbacks.
 - F. Egerer emphasized the significance of establishing baseline knowledge, particularly when adapting California models to regions in BC.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED
K. Garcia/S. Austen	Reach out to possible AAFC/Living Labs representatives to join the committee (K. Hannam or J. MacDonald).

6. 2024 MEETING DATES

- The remaining meeting dates for 2024 will be on June 5th and November 20th.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED
S. Austen	Send calendar invites to committee members.

7. ADJOURNMENT

- The next Innovation and Technology Committee meeting will be held on June 5, 2024, via MS Teams.