

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **Innovation & Technology Committee** meeting held virtually via MS Teams on June 5, 2024.

Members Present:

Felix Egerer
 Gail Nelson
 Galen Barnhardt
 Karen Yeung (CO-CHAIR)
 Kate Durisek
 Kathy Malone
 Kellie Garcia (CO-CHAIR)
 Lindsay King
 Lisa Wambold
 Molly Thurston
 Sarah O'Brien
 Shelby Austen
 Steve Brown
 Sukhpaul Bal

Unsworth Winery
 BC Fruit Growers' Association
 Monte Creek Winery
 Independent
 BC Wine Grape Council
 Hillside Winery
 Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
 BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
 Terralink Horticulture
 Pearl Agricultural Consulting
 Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
 Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
 Independent
 BC Cherry Association

Regrets:

Hank Markgraf
 Gayle Krahn
 Nick Ibuki
 Raj Gill

Syngenta Canada Inc.
 Terralink Horticulture
 Summerland Varieties Corporation
 Cohort Wholesale

1. WELCOMING REMARKS

2. ELECTION OF INDUSTRY CO-CHAIR

- Karen Yeung was elected as the industry co-chair.

3. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS		
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED	STATUS
All Members	Elect an industry co-chair at the next meeting on June 5, 2024.	✓
K. Garcia/S. Austen	Reach out to possible AAFC/Living Labs representatives to join the committee (K. Hannam or J. MacDonald).	IP
K. Garica/S. Austen	Research SFU's BC Centre for Agritech Innovation and identify possible collaboration opportunities.	IP
K. Garica/S. Austen	Draft a one-pager for committee priorities and project eligibility.	✓
S. Austen	Send 2024 extension roadmaps to committee members.	✓
S. Austen	Send calendar invites to committee members.	✓

4. MEMBER ROUND TABLE UPDATES

- G. Nelson informed the committee that the BCFGA has reestablished their crop protection and horticulture committees. They are also preparing to submit a project to the Cross-Commodity Advisory

Council for stabilization funding, focusing on BC's access to clean planting materials by piloting (in accordance with CFIA guidelines) the import of nursery stock to the Pacific Northwest without using methyl bromide fumigation.

- M. Thurston shared that her own crop was personally affected by the cold damage, and she looks forward to upcoming research for progress on these issues.
- G. Barnhardt reported that their vineyards in the Thompson and north Okanagan expect a full crop from the vines buried last year, thanks to a successful combination of burying and geotextiles. However, their Keremeos vineyard, which was difficult to bury, had poor survival rates. He also noted that the BC Wine Authority industry plebiscite has already approved the usage of new/experimental varieties at a rate of up to 5% in wine blends, but the results still require that the government rubber stamp their approval before any changes are made to the Wines of Marked Quality Regulation.
- K. Malone stated that if they have a stress-free summer and winter in Naramata, they could be on the path to recovery next year. The BCWGC has been asked to resume in-person R&D meetings due to new time-sensitive research areas and funding opportunities, with the Summerland Research Station agreeing to host these meetings. They hope to bring new ideas to this committee soon.
- K. Durisek informed the group that she has been busy with the Wine Industry Task Force and BCWGC has begun a regional varietal mapping project. Their recent R&D meeting focused on vine renewal and disease management, while the next will cover rootstocks and new varieties. She mentioned a new "Plant Hormone Solution" spray that protects plant material at cold temperatures, which could be an exciting product to explore. Additionally, she suggested that the committee consider AI strategies for precision management.
- S. Brown informed the group that many growers are at the end of their rope and lack the financial means to explore innovative solutions.
- S. Bal updated the group that, due to the cold events, the committee should focus on covers, heat retention in orchards, and adapting geotextiles for other commodities. He suggested innovative solutions like using UAVs for sprays and pest management.
- F. Eger informed the group that grape conditions on the island are normal, but irrigation remains a major issue. They are shifting towards precision irrigation due to the limited water supply. He also mentioned that the BCGA is exploring soil health with a UK company that developed a soil monitoring app. He emphasized the need to combine innovation with best practices and to look at how others have managed similar weather events.
- K. Yeung reported more vineyard growth in the areas around Osoyoos Lake compared to Oliver. Growers are concerned about the longevity of re-trunking options and the time before replanting is necessary. She suggested finding a product to assist with vine counts and status. She also emphasized that now is the time for innovative solutions, and growers are receptive.
- S. O'Brien stated that SIR plans to host a grower demonstration of the insecticide Spear-Lep.
- L. Wambold shared that a Niagara vineyard is testing UV light and hydrogen peroxide to control grape fungus. Trials for steam-based weeders are also underway, despite their energy intensity. Cover crops are gaining interest for improving soil health, nitrogen fixation, and temperature regulation. WSU is working on commercializing a cellulose nanocrystal spray to protect against winter damage.
- L. King informed the committee that BCMAF plans to integrate a cold weather framework into the extreme weather preparedness plan. The committee emphasized the need for input from producers who have experienced such conditions. She provided an update on the BC On-Farm Technology Adoption Program, which will focus on novel technologies to reduce labour dependency and is set to launch in a few months. She invited feedback on the draft program guide from the committee.
 - The committee asked for clarity on the goal of the program, if applications were on an individual basis, and the cost-sharing model. There were concerns about the difficulties in putting technology into practice and making use of the associated data, as well as variations in what equipment is seen as standard, suggesting a need for flexible eligibility criteria. They also asked about applicant eligibility, emphasizing the importance of helping producers implement these technologies. Lastly, they stressed the need to consider how effective each technology is when deciding on cost-sharing ratios.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED
L. King/G. Nelson	Connect RE: program eligibility (producers vs. associations)
L. King/G. Barnhardt	Connect RE: program eligibility (wineries)

5. OLD BUSINESS

5.1 COMMITTEE PRIORITIES AND PRINCIPLES FOR PROJECTS

- K. Garcia detailed the committee priorities and principles, highlighting their distinction from the terms of reference.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 PROJECT IDEAS

- K. Garcia walked the committee through the project development document, emphasizing the importance of documenting progress made across all organizations and matching existing funding sources with specific projects.
 - The committee highlighted the importance of prioritizing issues by their significance and ease of execution, suggesting that updates from various groups could pinpoint areas requiring support. They identified the need for projects addressing information/data sharing, weed management, ground cover, irrigation, and region-specific disease modelling.

7. ADJOURNMENT

- The next Innovation and Technology Committee meeting will be held on November 20, 2024, via MS Teams.