

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held in-person in the RDCO Woodhaven Boardroom, Kelowna BC, on June 25, 2024.

PRESENT

Adrian Arts
Beth Cavers
Gord Morrison
Kate Durisek
Laurel Van Dam
Madeleine van Roechoudt
Melissa Tesche
Michelle Cook
Nikki Callaway
Sukhpaul Bal
Tyrion Miskell
Walter Makepeace

BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
BC Cherry Association
Consolidated Fruit Packers
BC Wine Grape Council
BC Tree Fruits Cooperative
Grower at Large
BC Fruit Growers' Association
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
BC Wine Grape Council
BC Cherry Association
BC Grapegrowers' Association
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program

REGRETS

Ryan Ostertag
Jesse MacDonald

Consolidated Fruit Packers
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

GUESTS

None

STAFF

Kellie Garcia
Shamore Watson
Shelby Austen

CCLSP Project Director
CCLSP Domestic Labour Lead
CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Kellie Garcia, CCLSP Project Director, called the meeting to order at 10:06 am. She respectfully acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Melissa Tesche

"THAT the June 25, 2024, meeting agenda be approved as presented."

Seconded by: Michelle Cook

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Adrian pointed out an error in section 8.3 regarding the hiring of contractors to oversee the vote for the Orderly Marketing Commission. The necessary corrections were made, and the minutes were approved with amendments.

Moved by: Walter Makepeace

"THAT the April 30, 2024, meeting minutes be adopted as amended."

Seconded by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

CARRIED

4. ROUND TABLE UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

- Nikki updated the group on her recent work, which includes counting vines to assess survival rates. She is also collaborating with UBC, UVIC, and AAFC on research regarding the effects of temperature on quality. Nikki emphasized that, given the recent devastation, producers are going to need a proactive approach.
- Kate provided an update on her work with the Wine Grape Task Force. Their goals include addressing climate resiliency, improving data strategy, and updating organizational alignment. Additionally, BCWGC's research projects are progressing, with efforts underway to develop surveys and methods to assess the full impact of vineyard loss.
- Beth reported that the BCCA is actively managing export programs for China, Korea, the EU, the UK, and Japan, with a visit to Hong Kong planned for September. The cherry crop is only about 20% of a normal year, leading some growers to exit the export programs. To counter this, they are launching a promotional campaign for domestic markets, partly tied to the Olympics, and partly focused on artisanal, small-batch products. The BCCA AGM is set for February 14, 2025.
- Adrian provided an update on the Ministry's Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program, with all details available on the IAF website. He mentioned that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is collaborating closely with the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship to support producers in managing drought conditions.
- Laurel informed the group that there will be no stone fruit crop this year, with nectarine growers losing all their trees. Cold damage has impacted cherries and pears, but the extent of the damage to apples is still unclear. Growers are struggling with decisions on what to plant.
 - Nikki agreed that growers are facing weather-related challenges and pointed out that the wind has been particularly bad the last couple of years and recent wind gusts have been weakening new plantings.
- Tyrion noted that the BCGA has been actively hosting workshops this year to support growers and address vineyard damage. She is hopeful about the collaboration with the Wine Grape Task Force and looks forward to CCLSP participating in the discussions.
 - Melissa asked about the political landscape in the grape industry. Nikki explained that land-based operations cannot import grapes from outside BC, but non-land-based wineries can. The industry is divided: some oppose importing grapes, while others focus on labour and believe consumers will accept it. The ongoing debate is causing delays in securing Washington grapes, and the group noted the potential risks of importing. Kate emphasized the need for decisions that keep producers operational with minimal regulations.
- Gord informed the group that they've been packing a limited cherry supply for about a week. Those with cherries should see decent returns as market pricing remains strong. His biggest challenge is getting major retailers to understand the struggles of BC producers and he is working hard to spread the message.
- Sukhpaul has been advocating for cherry producers since the January freeze, seeking financial support for the industry. His efforts include addressing deficiencies in AgriStability. Recently, he participated in a panel discussion titled "Food – Can we grow it? Can we afford it?" by Conversations Live, emphasizing BC agriculture's GDP contribution and advocating for leadership-level changes.
- Michelle updated the group on BCDAS funding, noting that funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food will expire at the end of this year. She has submitted a letter to Dr. Joyce Austin, Executive Director of Plant and Animal Health, requesting renewed funding. The Council decided that CCLSP staff will draft a template letter that people and organizations can use to declare their support for BCDAS. These letters of

support will be sent to Dr. Joyce Austin on behalf of the industry. The Council plans to explore expanding funding to include other commodities like wine grapes and potatoes once secured.

- Walter updated the group on his crop losses this season and discussed the challenges of renewing winery licenses without a crop to produce wine. The sector expressed frustration about defining wine's place between agriculture and food, emphasizing the burden on winery owners to address these issues alone.
- Melissa updated the group on BCFGAs recent rally with a visit from the Premier, discussing orchard damage and the need for replanting support. She aims to double BCFGAs membership in one to two years and has hired a PR firm to address issues like retailers mislabelling Washington produce as BC-grown. Melissa echoed Sukhpaul's concerns and emphasized the need for a larger provincial agriculture budget. She also commended the recent payouts to growers without loss verification. Lastly, Melissa announced the transfer of foreign labour files to WALI management and updated on ongoing work with the Orderly Marketing Commission for apples, including a resolution to use earmarked funds for phase three and voting administration by a third-party consultant.
- Madeleine updated the group on her operations, noting that only about two of her ten acres are producing a crop this season.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

5.1 CCLSP COMMITTEES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Shelby informed that Council that since April 30, the Extension, Domestic Labour, and Innovation and Technology committees have each convened once, with all members actively engaged in brainstorming potential project ideas. All meeting minutes can be found on the CCLSP website under the Our Work section.

The CCLSP website is now fully operational, featuring an updated collaborative events calendar designed to enhance functionality for growers and practitioners. This calendar has been integrated into the websites of BCCA, BCWGC, and OKSIR, with efforts underway to include it on the BCFGAs and BCGAs websites soon.

Shelby informed the Council about three successful lunch and learn sessions hosted in collaboration with CCLSP partners. Two sessions, conducted with Ag Credit Corporation and Farm Credit Canada, focused on financial options for producers facing challenging times. The third session, held in partnership with AgSafe and the Canadian Mental Health Association, addressed mental health and resilience. Recordings of these sessions were distributed through partner newsletters and posted on the BCFGAs YouTube channel.

Looking ahead, the Council recommended that upcoming sessions should concentrate on business planning, grower economics, and succession planning to further support BC farmers.

5.2 STABILIZATION FUND: HOUSEKEEPING

Nothing to report.

5.3 STABILIZATION FUND: CURRENT PROJECTS

a) CROSS-COMMODITY LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROJECT

Kellie's report included updated budget and expenditures for the second quarter of 2024, covering general expenditures for CCLSP and its administered projects. She informed the Council that she is still working to secure representatives from the BC Grapegrowers' and BC Fruit Growers' Associations. Additionally, she proposed that the Council identify more "grower members at large" to join. A progress report will follow the meeting.

b) BC FRUIT WORKS

Shamore informed the Council that updates to the BC Fruit Works website, now available in Punjabi and French, are live. This season, BCFW is adopting a more customer-service-oriented approach, with 30 workers already registered. Shamore noted the challenge in engaging producers, highlighting that only three have registered as employers.

Michelle offered to promote BCFW to the SIR mailing list to boost engagement. Madeleine emphasized the flexibility of staffing commitments, tailored to growers' needs. Kate suggested providing employers visibility into employees' skillsets and work experience.

Additionally, the social media materials are finalized, and she sought feedback from the Council before launching the campaign.

c) VARIETY ACCESS PROJECT

Madeleine provided a brief update on the project. The growers involved decided to use the funding to decide on what type of entity would be best and what processes and checklists are needed to access new varieties, but not to set up the entity. It was agreed that a corporation would be best. The checklists will be available to any growers who want to pursue a similar approach.

5.4 STABILIZATION FUND: NEW APPLICATIONS

a) BC ACCESS TO PLANT MATERIAL (BCFGA)

Kellie guided the committee through the project application and due diligence checklist.

Melissa summarized the project, outlining their collaboration with the Northwest Nursery Improvement Institute to address concerns raised by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in a practical manner. Their objectives include piloting a systems approach to importing nursery stock without fumigation, conducting education and outreach for growers, and gathering data to assess the risk of Oriental Fruit Moth from imported nursery stock to BC.

Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal

Seconded by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approve the B.C. Access to Plant Material TFISP application submitted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association, with a maximum funding contribution of \$33,000, and a project timeline of June 27, 2024, to December 31, 2025."

CARRIED

Melissa and Adrian abstained from voting on the motion.

5.5 DISCUSSION OF OTHER CROSS-COMMODITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

a) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT – PROPOSAL FOR FALL FORUMS

Kellie updated the Council on the CCLSP's proposal to host two local government engagement forums in the fall. One forum is planned for the North/Central Okanagan, and the other for the South Okanagan/Similkameen. She emphasized the critical need for local government engagement in agricultural discussions and relationship building, noting current gaps in consultation.

Nikki suggested using O'Rourke Family Estates and Dorenberg Orchards for the North/Central Okanagan tour.

Sukhpaul highlighted the value of these forums for building relationships and facilitating candid discussions with policy makers and staff. He emphasized the importance of engaging elected officials as well as local government staff, leading the group to decide on separate tracks for staff and officials at the event.

Melissa recommended incorporating narrated tours to educate staff about producer challenges. Madeleine proposed selecting specific topics and challenges to showcase, then choosing locations accordingly.

The Council agreed that organizing a local government forum presents a valuable opportunity. They preferred a narrated bus tour over traditional boardroom presentations. The next step will be forming a subcommittee to support CCLSP staff in planning the event.

b) WATER MANAGEMENT – IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY PROJECTS, AGRICULTURE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

Due to time constraints, this item was not addressed.

c) EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Due to time constraints, this item was not addressed.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 LABOUR SUPPLY RESEARCH PROJECT

The Council was provided with a one-page summary of the labour research project for their review.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The next Cross-Commodity Advisory Council meeting will be held on September 5, 2024, from 1-3 pm.