

# CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held in-person at RDCO's Woodhaven Boardroom and virtually via MS Teams on November 26, 2024.

## **PRESENT**

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

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

## **REGRETS**

Jesse MacDonald

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 9:06 am.

## **2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Moved by: Beth Cavers**

**Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal**

*"THAT the November 26, 2024, meeting agenda be approved as presented."*

**CARRIED**

## **3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**Moved by: Melissa Tesche**

**Seconded by: Walter Makepeace**

*"THAT the September 5, 2024, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."*

**CARRIED**

#### 4. ROUND TABLE UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

- Michelle shared that the codling moth season ended successfully, with the SIR program meeting its damage threshold targets. Improvements to traps resulted in increased wild captures. Apple movement throughout the valley increased due to the BCTF closure. Outreach efforts are underway with packing houses to provide education and facilitate online access to capture data.
- Kate reported that the BCWGC R&D Committee met in person for the first time in five years at SRDC to connect institutions and stakeholders. Resource challenges at the research centre remain due to retirements. The KTT Committee is focused on sharing research results, improving website accessibility for members, and promoting SWBC in the Best Practices Guide. A health and safety roadmap has been developed to clarify organizational roles. The Wine Grape Industry Task Force is hiring a program manager, who may participate in future CCAC meetings. Kate emphasized the task force's efforts to build on stabilization work and align with the cross-commodity forward-focused model.
- Beth shared that the short crop shaped much of the summer's focus, particularly on cold mitigation and damage. With only 20% of the regular crop harvested, early signs suggest a potential bumper crop for 2025. The association ran a domestic marketing campaign over the summer and attended a trade show in Hong Kong in September. A spring meeting is planned for strategic planning and possibly redefining BCCA's role.
- Nikki reflected on insights from recent travels to England and Italy, noting that climate change is impacting all commodities. Collaboration across sectors is becoming essential. She emphasized the importance of resilience and moving forward together and said that she has observed more positivity in the local wine industry than she anticipated despite challenges.
- Tyrion reported that BCGA has been prioritizing education and fostering community after a tough season, focusing on helping growers maximize benefits from production insurance and AgriStability by ensuring they are informed and enrolled.
- Ryan shared his experience in Ottawa at the CPMA Fall Harvest Management Committee and at a parliamentary question period, highlighting the need for grower input in policymaking. He emphasized the importance of accurate data collection for CFP and noted that data will be key to the future of the produce supply chain.
- Gord noted that CFP, like others, took on extra volume due to the BCTF closure. Retailers are stepping in to move BC apples, focusing on quality and understanding industry challenges. Despite smaller sizes in some varieties, overall quality and colour are strong, with packers collaborating effectively post-closure.
- Sukhpaul emphasized that BRM programs are failing to support growers in the current crisis. With only a 20% crop, growers face increased costs and reduced returns. He stressed the need for continued government advocacy for meaningful changes to sustain agriculture.
- Madeleine echoed concerns about BRM programs, noting that multi-year weather impacts drastically reduce coverage. With grapes, insurance tied to a 5-year average significantly limits support after consecutive bad years.
- Walt highlighted crop insurance issues stemming from frozen, splitting trees in 2023. He had to remove 12 acres of apples and lost some of his grape crop. He emphasized the critical importance of keeping detailed records for insurance claims.
- Melissa reported that BCFGA supported emergency efforts during the BCTF closure. They are also assisting former BCTF growers to explore a smaller co-op model, and planning to rebuild membership, as 2/3 of BCFGA members were also members of BCTF. They are also working with MAF to update the production guide. BCFGA's current lobbying efforts focus on a climate relief fund and addressing differences in crop aid compared to the U.S. They've asked IAF to lead Apple Marketing Commission work, with a vote expected in March. In a recent trip to Ottawa, BCFGA learned about the opportunity to access parliamentary resources to analyze issues like U.S. fruit dumping.
  - Beth added that a similar issue exists for cherries, with truckloads being sent on consignment to retailers like Walmart.

- Adrian noted that Lana Popham is now Minister, with Michelle Koski as Deputy Minister. He expressed excitement about meetings resuming at the research station. The Climate Resiliency Program website launches in December, with applications opening in January. MAF partnered with BCFGA to support apple growers after the BCTF closure, but uptake for the food safety program was low and has been left to packers. The provincial data strategy project has dropped from 11 participating packers to 3. He also warned of a new avian flu outbreak and offered to share more information if needed.
  - Melissa asked if the ADM is still working on the BRM project in her new role. Adrian explained the project focuses on improving communication and helping growers understand what BRM programs can and cannot do. Sukhpaul highlighted the need for a clear "how-to" guide for BRM programs.
  - Walt noted that unclear reporting requirements often result in growers learning through denied claims. He stressed the lack of communication, and the challenges faced by farmers with limited language or literacy skills, which leaves them at a disadvantage.

## **5. REGULAR BUSINESS**

### **5.1 CCLSP COMMITTEES AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Shelby Austen provided an update on CCLSP committees and communications.

The Extension Committee met on November 14 with 17 attendees, including three new members, to share updates and plan the 2025 Extension Conference, scheduled for February 26-28. Key ideas include a grower panel, research updates, and workshops on peer-to-peer learning in agriculture. Preparations for the research briefs project, in collaboration with ACARN, BC Food Web, and BCWGC, are also underway. The Domestic Labour Committee met on November 22 to discuss updates on BC Fruit Works and the Labour Supply Research Project. The Innovation and Technology Committee met on November 20 with discussions focused on project ideas related to cold mitigation, bioplastics, data strategy, and noise control technologies.

She also highlighted website updates, including new "Project Spotlights" for CCLSP initiatives, and noted the success of the Lake Country bus tour on November 6, with further details to be shared later in the agenda.

### **5.2 STABILIZATION FUND: FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Kellie Garcia provided a financial update on the Stabilization Fund, highlighting current commitments and the remaining balance of \$591,333. She proposed reallocating the \$43,413 designated for Steering Committee Farmer Remuneration to general projects, as the CCLSP budget can cover this remuneration. Additionally, \$4,481 left over from the 2024 Extension Practitioners Conference could also be moved back to general projects, which would bring the remaining balance to \$639,222.

Kellie requested direction from the Advisory Council on whether to allocate portions of the remaining funds to specific categories, such as extension, innovation & technology, or domestic labour, or to leave them flexible for worthwhile projects as they arise.

Melissa emphasized the importance of prioritizing the strongest projects over using predefined categories. Madeleine agreed, stressing the need for clear priorities to demonstrate the success of a cross-commodity approach. Beth noted that focusing on priorities ensures opportunities are addressed, whereas fixed categories may limit flexibility.

Kellie stated that priorities are guided by this group, the committees, extension conference roadmaps, TFISP recommendations, and CCLSP strategic and work plans.

The discussion focused on shifting priorities, particularly after recent challenging years. Sukhpaul highlighted the need for further investigation into BRM programs and an industry wide data strategy, suggesting that updates and

data collection are necessary to improve the sustainability of the sector. However, due to the broad scope, it has not yet been formalized as a project. Madeleine cautioned against using provincial funds to lobby the government, advocating instead for a collaborative approach with professional, actionable solutions given the urgency.

Melissa agreed on the importance of addressing BRM but questioned whether CCLSP is the right platform, suggesting it may be more appropriate for the interior horticulture sector. She noted that individual commodity meetings aren't sufficient, and a collective effort might be needed.

**Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt**

**Seconded by: Melissa Tesche**

*"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves reallocating industry remuneration funding in the amount of \$43,413 to future projects, with industry remuneration to be covered by the existing CCLSP budget. And that the Advisory Council also approves reallocating the unspent budget from IAF-202403-09984 of \$4,481 to future projects."*

### **5.3 STABILIZATION FUND: CURRENT PROJECTS**

#### **a) CROSS-COMMODITY LEADERSHIP SUPPORT PROJECT**

Kellie provided an update on the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project (CCLSP). The team is exploring approximately 10 new project ideas, some of which will be reviewed at the January Advisory Council meeting. Budget updates indicate steady progress, with significant funds still available for allocation. Membership updates include welcoming Karen Yeung from BCWGC as the new representative while efforts continue to secure additional members from the BCFGA and BCGA, including grower representatives at large.

#### **b) BC ACCESS TO PLANT MATERIAL (BCFGA)**

**Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal**

**Seconded by: Madeleine van Roechoudt**

*"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the BC Access to Plant Material Project Progress Report submitted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association and recommends the first payment of \$14,017."*

**CARRIED**

#### **c) BC FRUIT WORKS**

Shamore presented her report in detail. Key highlights from the BC Fruit Works update include the completion of most deliverables, such as the website, HR materials, marketing campaigns, job matching, and industry engagement. Remaining work focuses on producer education and a long-term strategy. The project timeline has been extended to March 31, 2025, to use all budget allocated to the project. To address low participation and engagement challenges, the Project Lead integrated survey questions into the broader labour research study to gather feedback and inform recommendations. She is also collaborating with industry partners and plans to work with the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council to develop an eLearning module for tree fruits and wine grapes, addressing a critical resource gap.

- Sukhpaul acknowledged the challenges of the project due to poor crops and complimented Shamore's efforts. He suggested increasing participation by having each commodity group distribute a one-pager highlighting the benefits of BC Fruit Works. Kellie agreed, emphasizing the need to move away from siloed approaches to one under the industry associations, noting the uphill nature of the work over the past three years.
- Tyrion stated that the industry seems to be prioritizing Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) over domestic labour, which might not be a sustainable approach. The Council noted the importance of domestic labour for small scale farms who cannot rely on TFW. Kate suggested that targeted communication is needed to

identify and engage growers best suited for domestic labour. She emphasized creating a grower profile to better match the program with those who could benefit most.

- Sukhpaul added that while domestic labour remains limited, efforts should focus on demonstrating the industry's commitment to improving conditions and pushing back against negative narratives. He highlighted that growers who invest in worker well-being tend to succeed. Madeleine supported this, stressing the importance of marketing farm work positively to enhance perceptions, which also benefits TFW programs.
- Shamore concluded that while BCFW has value, job matching may not be a good focus. She recommended positioning the industry to attract top talent and focusing on broader strategies to improve engagement.

#### **d) GLOBAL CLUB ACCESS FOR BC GROWERS**

Madeleine provided an update on the project, which is behind schedule but moving forward. Tools have been put in place to setup a legal entity and a grower return model has been developed. A grower checklist is also under development. The project team is currently completing a go/no go on 2025 budding.

#### **e) LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND AGRICULTURE TOUR**

Kellie provided an update on the November 6, 2024, "Agriculture in Action: Bridging Policy & Practice" bus tour in Lake Country, which brought together planners and tree fruit and wine grape producers to discuss regulatory challenges. Visits to four sites showcased issues related to worker housing, water use and wastewater discharge, waste management, and farm diversification with participants highlighting the need for simplified regulatory processes, balanced dialogue between staff and farmers, and improved public education. The Oliver tour was canceled due to low engagement, and the remaining budget will be allocated to a spring tour. Kellie requested the Advisory Council's endorsement for an interim payment to cover costs from the Lake Country tour.

- Madeleine emphasized the importance of selecting sites that are directly relevant to the work of planning staff and noted the absence of engineers, who could provide valuable input.
- Michelle highlighted that the tone of the tour occasionally became disrespectful and suggested fostering a more balanced and collaborative dialogue in future events.
- Melissa proposed using the insights from the tour as a foundation for another local government-focused project. Kellie agreed, acknowledging lessons learned and committing to building on them for future initiatives.

**Moved by: Beth Cavers**

**Seconded by: Madeleine van Roechoudt**

*"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the project expense report for the Local Government and Agriculture Tours submitted by the Okanagan Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends the interim payment of \$6,407.33."*

**CARRIED**

#### **f) BC DAS OPERATIONS**

No discussion.

#### **g) BC DAS EXPANSION TO WINE GRAPES**

No discussion.

#### **h) EXTENSION CONFERENCE**

This update was covered under agenda item 5.1.

#### **i) RESEARCH BRIEFS**

This update was covered under agenda item 5.1.

### **5.4 STABILIZATION FUND: NEW APPLICATIONS**

No new applications.

### **5.5 DISCUSSION OF OTHER CROSS-COMMODITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

## **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **6.1 LABOUR SUPPLY RESEARCH PROJECT**

The Domestic Labour Supply Research Project, conducted in collaboration with KPU's Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, explores challenges in domestic labour for the Okanagan tree fruit and wine grape sectors. As of mid-November, the team has completed a literature review, analysed census data, and conducted most grower and worker interviews, focusing on recruitment, retention, housing, and wages. Final interviews will wrap up in December, with analysis and reporting scheduled for winter and spring 2025. Key themes include labour reliability, competition from other sectors, and worker housing issues, with policy recommendations to follow.

### **6.2 PROPOSED 2025 MEETING DATES**

In 2025, the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council will meet on January 28, April 24, June 24, November 27.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

The next Cross-Commodity Advisory Council meeting will be held on January 28, 2024, from 9 am to 12 pm.