

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held virtually via MS Teams on March 18, 2025.

PRESENT

Adrian Arts
Beth Cavers
Dapinder Gill
Karen Yeung
Kate Durisek
Madeleine van Roechoudt
Melissa Tesche
Michelle Cook
Sukhpaul Bal
Tyrion Miskell
Walter Makepeace

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

REGRETS

Gord Morrison
Ryan Ostertag
Jesse MacDonald
Nikki Callaway

Consolidated Fruit Packers
Consolidated Fruit Packers
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
BC Wine Grape Council

GUESTS

Galen Barnhardt

Barn to Bottle Consulting

STAFF

Kellie Garcia
Shamore Watson
Shelby Austen

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

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Walter Makepeace

"THAT the March 18, 2025, meeting agenda be approved as presented."

Seconded by: Beth Cavers

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal

"THAT the January 28, 2025, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."

Seconded by: Walter Makepeace

CARRIED

4. REGULAR BUSINESS

4.1 BC DAS EXPANSION TO WINE GRAPES: PHASE 1 REPORT & PRESENTATION

Galen Barnhardt of Barn to Bottle Consulting presented the Phase 1 Report and Go/No-go Checklist for expanding the BC Decision Aid System (BC DAS) to the wine grape sector. The report assessed the feasibility of adapting the platform based on industry needs.

Key challenges for wine grape growers include managing pests and diseases (especially powdery mildew, mealybug, and Botrytis bunch rot), climate extremes, and improving irrigation and nutrient timing. Potential barriers to adoption include market demand and value, long-term funding, the need for model validation using BC-specific data, effective weather network coverage, and the availability of suitable models.

The report found strong industry interest in wine grape-specific models and recommends moving forward with model validation, securing funding, and engaging stakeholders for Phase 2.

- Michelle asked about adding private weather stations to improve coverage. Galen noted that while there is grower interest, using private stations raises liability concerns. Not all stations are compatible with the system, and having one central authority helps ensure proper calibration and reliability.
- Kellie outlined next steps for Phase 2, including developing a project plan, engaging stakeholders, and beta testing models. She noted interest from other sectors (e.g., potatoes, blueberries), which could help build a stronger case for provincial funding. Madeleine supported this, emphasizing the value of a cross-commodity approach.
- Melissa asked whether the 2025 growing season could be used for data validation. Galen confirmed this may be possible, depending on researcher availability and the timing of grant funding.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechooldt

Seconded by: Kate Durisek

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes Phase 1 Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with Phase 2 of the project.”

CARRIED

4.2 BC FRUIT WORKS: YEAR 3 FINAL REPORT & PRESENTATION

Shamore presented her final report and reviewed the original goals of the BC Fruit Works (BCFW) project: promoting agricultural jobs to Canadians, connecting growers with workers, and providing HR support for producers. For long-term success, she recommends shifting focus from direct job matching to broader workforce development. This includes raising awareness of industry benefits, improving working conditions, and supporting long-term workforce solutions for both employers and workers.

Key recommendations include:

- Making BCFW an formal initiative under the CCLSP
- Strengthening partnerships and industry engagement
- Enhancing the website as a central hub for employment-related information
- Delivering targeted workforce and HR support initiatives
- Advancing a holistic labour strategy through cross-industry collaboration

To implement these recommendations, the industry must be open to shifting perceptions about labour, improving engagement, removing systemic barriers, and ensuring sustained support and resources.

- Madeleine asked whether partnerships with ski resorts or similar organizations helped increase worker engagement. Shamore shared that due to a challenging season and lower crop yields, fewer workers sought jobs in the Okanagan. Madeleine pointed out that messaging around low crops can have wider impacts on recruitment.
- Tyrion asked how to address fragmentation within the industry. Shamore recommended developing a single, coordinated labour strategy that includes both domestic and foreign labour, managed by a consistent team. Madeleine agreed, highlighting the need for a unified approach that supports both seasonal and permanent roles.
- Melissa noted that the BCFGA Board has been discussing a pilot project related to foreign labour that would involve collaboration with CCLSP and WALI.

4.3 CROSS-COMMODITY PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Kellie shared that three new project applications are in progress, focusing on herbicide use, ABaZyne trials for cold and heat mitigation, and the development of an industry data strategy. These proposals will be brought forward for Council review at the next meeting or later in the year.

4.4 DOMESTIC LABOUR RESEARCH PROJECT: UPDATE

For information only.

4.5 2025 EXTENSION CONFERENCE: UPDATE

Kellie provided an overview of the financials for the 2025 Extension Conference. The event brought together professionals from the tree fruit and wine grape sectors to strengthen cross-commodity collaboration and improve extension services. Attendees participated in professional development workshops and worked to align industry priorities for the coming year. The conference wrapped up with a broad discussion where producers, researchers, and consultants shared insights to help guide future extension efforts. CCLSP staff are currently compiling the key takeaways, and a summary report will be shared soon.

Moved by: Karen Yeung

Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the project expense report for the 2025 Building Bridges Extension Conference submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends the final payment of \$31,555."

CARRIED

5. OTHER BUSINESS

6. ADJOURNMENT

The next Cross-Commodity Advisory Council meeting will be held in-person on April 24, 2025, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.