

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **Innovation & Technology Committee** meeting held virtually via MS Teams on June 10, 2025.

Members Present:

Barbara Hall	UBC Okanagan
Felix Egerer	Unsworth Winery
Gail Nelson	BC Fruit Growers' Association
Karen Yeung (CO-CHAIR)	BC Wine Grape Council
Kate Durisek	BC Wine Grape Council
Kellie Garcia (CO-CHAIR)	Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
Lindsay King	BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
Molly Thurston	Pearl Agricultural Consulting
Nick Ibuki	Summerland Varieties Corporation
Sarah O'Brien	Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
Shelby Austen	Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
Sukhpaul Bal	BC Cherry Association

Regrets:

Galen Barnhardt	Barn to Bottle Consulting
Hank Markgraf	Syngenta Canada Inc.
Jesse Macdonald	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Kathy Malone	Hillside Winery
Lisa Wambold	Terralink Horticulture
Steve Brown	Independent

1. WELCOMING REMARKS

2. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS		
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED	STATUS
Kellie/Shelby	Connect with UBC researchers RE: LiteFarm features & compatibility	
Kellie/Jesse/Lindsay	Follow up RE: Cold hardiness project & ABAzyne trials	✓
Kellie/Felix	Connect: RE Lasers & bird deterrent project application	✓

3. MEMBER ROUND TABLE UPDATES

- Gail shared that Adrian Arts has started in his new role as the BCFGA Executive Director. The BCFGA team is focused on strategic planning and priority-setting, including membership support and grower education sessions. Over 20 cross-commodity participants recently completed the PAC exam, and they hope to offer the workshop annually. They also held four successful sprayer calibration courses in collaboration with Pearl Agricultural Consulting.

- Kate reported that BCWGC will hold their in-person R&D meeting at the Summerland research centre on June 11. They are aiming to hold these meetings twice a year and hope to align with AAFC's grape commodity day in November. The June 11 R&D meeting will also address WGITF implementation and researcher involvement in innovation clusters. They're exploring short, medium, and long-term projects under unified themes and considering a more integrated KTT strategy at the project outset. The task force aims to develop a funding-ready model for coordinated innovation and technology management.
- Karen and Felix noted that fieldwork is currently very busy and they are looking forward to the upcoming bird deterrents project.
- Barbara mentioned that tissue culture experiments are underway, alongside an optimization project for propagation.
- Sukhpaul explained that things are busy in the orchard and mentioned installation of a large light on the back of his tractor to allow for nighttime spraying. Innovate Ag, which recently acquired 2nd Site Bioscience, will be on his farm on June 13 to demo their scale and labour tracking solutions.
- Lindsay indicated that the first Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada and Ministry of Agriculture tree fruit climate research advisory committee meeting was held for the cherry protective cover trial. The cold protection strategies project includes cellulose nanocrystals, Frosco foam spray, ABA-Tetralone, ABA-Natural, ABA Boost and an anti-ice nucleation agent with a focus on lab and station-based research.
- Nick noted he just returned from the International Cherry Symposium in Richland, WA. It is an exciting time of year, and SVC is actively evaluating new cherry varieties in the pipeline.
- Sarah reported that SIR is currently contacting growers about getting sprays on. Damage is beginning to appear in infested orchards.

4. OLD BUSINESS

4.1 CURRENT PROJECT UPDATES

a) BC DAS Operations

Molly informed the committee that BC DAS is active for the season. Various spring models are now online and the number of new users continuously increasing. With new staff at WSU, there has been a learning curve regarding differences in how data is represented between Canada and the USA. The pear psylla model is now live for general users, and discussions are ongoing about developing additional models. Several field days were held in the Okanagan to review models and share DAS information with growers. Another small group discussion is planned for Creston. Attendance at grower events has been lower this year, with increased interest in one-on-one training sessions.

b) BC DAS Expansion to Winegrapes

Kellie informed the committee that Galen has provided a draft workplan for Phase 2 of the BCDAS expansion to wine grapes. Planned activities include adding 1–3 models, conducting beta testing, completing knowledge transfer and outreach, and validating model outputs for BC conditions.

- Kate asked if it would be valuable to incorporate a micro credential or course as part of training for the new models, noting that UBC and Okanagan College are both interested in

supporting training efforts. Molly expressed support for the idea, emphasizing the value of hands-on opportunities for learning. Kellie will follow up with Galen regarding the training suggestion.

- Felix asked whether the expansion would apply only to the Okanagan or all growing regions. Kellie responded that they would like to include Vancouver Island, but this will depend on the availability of weather stations.

c) Herbicide Technology & Extension

Molly informed the committee that she will be working with Ken Sapsford, former Pesticide Specialist with the Ministry of Agriculture, to explore herbicide options and sprayer technologies. The project will assess available technologies and alternative year-round and rotational products to replace glyphosate. The project's goal is to support growers in improving their existing practices. Pre- and post-emergence demonstration trials are planned for next year. A recent field day focused on sprayer technologies generated strong grower discussion, highlighting the need for better product understanding and application practices. A winter seminar is being considered to dive deeper into herbicide programming. Additional events will be planned as capacity allows, and informational materials are expected to be available soon.

d) Bird Deterrent Education & Outreach

Kellie informed the committee that the bird control project has been approved by the Advisory Council and will be administered through the BC Grapegrowers' Association. The main objectives are to promote innovative bird control options, develop updated guidelines on available tools, and conduct outreach. The BC Agricultural Climate Action Research Network will be subcontracted to carry out the research, develop materials, and lead outreach efforts. While demonstrations will take place in vineyards, the project is also intended to benefit tree fruit growers.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 PROPOSED PROJECTS

a) ABAzyne Abiotic Stress Demonstration Trials

Sukhpaul shared that the ABAzyne project application was brought to the BC Cherry Association's Research and Extension Committee for further discussion. A follow-up meeting with ABAzyne Biosciences is planned to explore partnership opportunities and gather more information. An update will be provided once more details are available.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The next Innovation and Technology Committee meeting will be held virtually via MS Teams on November 12, 2025, from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm.