

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held virtually via MS Teams on June 24, 2025.

PRESENT

Adrian Arts
Alan Gatzke
Dapinder Gill
Kate Durisek
Madeleine van Roechoudt
Michelle Cook
Nikki Callaway
Philip Gyug
Sukhpaul Bal
Tyrion Miskell
Walter Makepeace

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

REGRETS

Beth Cavers
Gord Morrison
Jesse MacDonald
Karen Yeung
Ryan Ostertag

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

STAFF

Kellie Garcia
Shelby Austen

CCLSP Project Director
CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager

GUESTS

Cooper Clayton McGeough
Kaelan Watson
Kent Mullinix
Kristi Tatebe
Morgan Game

Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
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1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

"THAT the June 24, 2025, meeting agenda be approved as presented."

Seconded by: Kate Durisek

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Walter Makepeace

Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal

“THAT the May 29, 2025, meeting minutes be adopted as presented.”

CARRIED

4. GUEST PRESENTATION

4.1 Labour Supply Research Project, KPU Research Team

The KPU Research Team shared their findings, with Kristi outlining key recommendations for all stakeholders. Housing, worker amenities, and challenges with recruitment and retention were identified as the most significant barriers by both workers and employers. The team is now finalizing their full report and stakeholder-specific briefs.

- Alan asked whether the research explored visa extension models, such as Australia’s system where travellers can extend their stay by working in specific sectors like agriculture. The team agreed to investigate whether a similar approach could be adapted locally.
- Sukhpaul expressed support for incentive-based strategies to retain workers and attract younger people to the sector. He suggested a government-led framework that could include tuition credits, infrastructure funding or reimbursements, and Employment Insurance changes - such as counting industry-specific hours as double for insurable time.
- Madeleine recommended that the stakeholder briefs be tailored to each level of government (federal, provincial, and local) based on their respective areas of responsibility.

5. MEMBER ROUNDTABLE

Not all members were able to provide updates due to time constraints.

- Kate shared that the Wine Grape Industry Task Force has entered the implementation phase, with six working groups including one focused on organizational alignment. The climate change working group is being formed around innovation clusters for key issues like drought and cold mitigation to develop holistic solutions. SWBC will be hosting field days in partnership with the BCGA and Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The BC Wine Grape Council’s AGM will be held virtually in August.
- Sukhpaul reported that the BCCA is currently hosting a delegation of buyers from China, who are touring packing houses, farms, and marketers. The association is also exploring trade opportunities with the Philippines and working toward an agreement with CFIA.
- Adrian noted that BCFGA will host the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada’s Apple Working Group on July 9 and 10, with tours planned at the Summerland Research and Development Centre and the SIR Program’s rearing facility in Osoyoos. BCFGA and the BC Cherry Association have jointly written to Minister Popham regarding Tier 3 diesel engine restrictions under the Tree Fruit Climate Resiliency Program. Adrian will also be meeting with Parliamentary Secretary Sandhu to discuss potential labour policy changes.
- Philip shared that payments for the Climate Change Response Fund were issued this week. He also noted the recent departure of the Ministry’s Plant Pathologist.
 - In response, the group discussed drafting a joint letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food’s Plant and Animal Health Branch to emphasize the importance of this role to the industry.

- Michelle mentioned the upcoming vote on the proposed Apple Marketing Commission.
- Alan shared that during recent visits to farms and packing houses across the valley, he observed a high level of optimism among producers—a welcome and refreshing change.

6. REGULAR BUSINESS

6.1 CCLSP Committees & Communications

Shelby provided an update on the recent BC Fruit Works marketing campaign. Updates included removing job matching language from the website and launching a new Jobs page linking job seekers to regional employment directories. A “Worker’s Guide to Okanagan Agriculture” was also developed to help job seekers understand what to expect when working in the tree fruit and wine grape sectors. The campaign is now underway to promote seasonal opportunities and drive traffic to the Jobs page, where applicants can connect directly with employers.

6.2 Current Cross-Commodity Projects

Kellie directed council members to her memo for updates on current CCLSP projects. She noted that the BC DAS Operations project is over budget by \$13,440 due to high exchange rates and requested a budget increase to cover the shortfall.

Moved by: Adrian Arts

Seconded by: Tyrion Miskell

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves a budget uplift of \$13,440 for the BC DAS Operations project to cover the additional cost incurred for the Washington State University contract due to the high US dollar exchange rate.”

CARRIED

Philip abstained from voting on the motion.

6.3 Cross-Commodity Project Development & Funding Applications

Kellie reviewed the stabilization fund, outlining allocations to date and proposing funding allocations for the remainder of the budget.

a) Local Government Education & Outreach

The application was tabled so that funding could be directed to the Production Guide Modernization project (submitted as a late agenda item). Local government engagement will proceed under the general CCLSP operating budget instead.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Alan Gatzke

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council acknowledges that a TFISP application was not submitted for the Local Government Education and Outreach project and approves the initiative to proceed under the CCLSP general budget instead.”

CARRIED

Philip abstained from voting on the motion.

b) Sterile Insect Release Program Operations and Research

Michelle walked the Council through the application. The SIR Program is requesting bridge funding to supplement grower contributions to operations while the SIR Board and staff continue to boost sales revenue and increase tax rates. SIR staff will also complete a high-level review of sterile insect techniques (SIT) available for other pests of concern and share that information with the advisory council.

- The group identified oriental fruit moth, climbing cutworms, and spotted lanternfly as additional pests worth researching for SIT.
- Madeleine voiced strong support for SIR, noting she has not needed to spray for codling moth in six years. She emphasized the program's success lies in its mandatory, area-wide approach. She also highlighted the challenges U.S. competitors have faced in developing their own rearing facility due to a shift away from nuclear sources - resulting in Washington purchasing from SIR instead.
- Walter expressed his support for SIR as an organic grower.
- Alan asked about SIR's five-year financial plan. Michelle explained that the requested funding would help SIR continue to build reserves for a large capital expenditure coming up in 2028 while still offering full services to the growers.
- Kate recommended the Government of Canada's Agri-Assurance Program as a potential funding source after 2028.
- Adrian asked whether SIR has considered the implementation of previously suggested diversification initiatives, such as servicing BCDAS weather stations, starling control, and trap monitoring for cherries. Michelle said the current focus is on expanding sales in the Pacific Northwest but welcomed further discussion on those ideas.
- Sukhpaul asked about barriers to increasing U.S. sales. Michelle explained that a contractor is supporting 2025 sales efforts, and although they are currently working with a single distributor, sales are steadily growing. She noted that orders are placed each fall for the following growing season, and because sales occur only once per year, demand must be confirmed well in advance. While the facility has capacity to produce more sterile moths, current demand has not yet reached that level.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Adrian Arts

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Financial Support for Producer Portion of SIR Program Costs TFISP application submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program with a maximum funding contribution of \$400,000 and a project timeline of July 1, 2025, to November 30, 2026."

CARRIED

Michelle and Philip abstained from voting on the motion.

c) ABASyne Abiotic Stress Demonstration Trials for Cherries

Kellie walked the Council through the project application and due diligence form, noting it was originally submitted in May but required additional information before moving forward. Sukhpaul provided an update on BCCA's follow-up meeting with ABASyne Bioscience. The company has already conducted significant research on grapes in Ontario and is now looking to focus on cherries. The application proposes funding the first two years of the project, with the BC Cherry Association funding the remaining two years.

- Kellie recommended confirming at the beginning of the project whether a research agreement is needed.
- Philip asked if participants for the trials have been identified. Kellie responded that this would be done during the project start-up phase.
- Kate suggested establishing a formal agreement with ABZyne Bioscience that includes an option to withdraw after the first two years. She expressed concern about BCCA committing to fund the final two years if the initial phase is not successful.
- Adrian voiced support for funding research that delivers practical benefits to growers, particularly in terms of cost savings and increased resiliency.

Moved by: Walter Makepeace

Seconded by: Adrian Arts

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the ABZyne Abiotic Stress Demonstration Trials for Cherries TFISP application submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program with a maximum funding contribution of \$131,250 and a project timeline of July 1, 2025, to November 30, 2026.”

CARRIED

Phil abstained from voting on the motion.

d) Tree Fruit Production Guide Modernization

Kellie presented the application submitted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association. Adrian provided background on the Production Guide, noting it is a joint initiative between industry and the Ministry. The guide needs a major overhaul and also requires regular updates, a dedicated steering committee, and a new memorandum of understanding with the province to clarify responsibilities.

- Kate expressed support for the project and emphasized the importance of aligning it with the Grape Production Guide. Adrian agreed, noting the need for consistency and functional alignment across guides.
- Michelle reminded Adrian to ensure the guide is fully integrated with BCDAS.
- Alan suggested including chemical cost data to enable per-acre analysis and support informed decision-making. Adrian replied that the BCFGAs is looking into providing this service to its members.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roehoudt

Seconded by: Kate Durisek

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Tree Fruit Production Guide Modernization TFISP application submitted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association with a maximum funding contribution of \$100,000 and a project timeline of July 15, 2025, to March 31, 2026.”

CARRIED

Adrian and Philip abstained from voting on the motion.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

8. ADJOURNMENT

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held in person on November 27, 2025, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm.