

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held virtually via MS Teams on November 27, 2025.

PRESENT

Adrian Arts	BC Fruit Growers' Association
Alan Gatzke	BC Fruit Growers' Association
Beth Cavers	BC Cherry Association
Bobby Ercego	BC Grapegrowers' Association
Dapinder Gill	BC Grapegrowers' Association
Gord Morrison	Consolidated Fruit Packers
Jesse MacDonald	Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
Karen Yeung	BC Wine Grape Council
Kate Durisek	BC Wine Grape Council
Madeleine van Roechoudt	Grower at Large
Michelle Cook	Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
Philip Gyug	BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
Sukhpaul Bal	BC Cherry Association

REGRETS

Shirley Choi	Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
Walter Makepeace	Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program

STAFF

Kellie Garcia	CCLSP Project Director
Shelby Austen	CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Alan Gatzke

"THAT the November 27, 2025, meeting agenda be approved as presented."

Seconded by: Michelle Cook

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

"THAT the June 24, 2025, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."

Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal

CARRIED

4. MEMBER ROUNDTABLE

- Jesse shared that AAFC is waiting for the outcome of the federal budget vote, which may impact research programs and staffing levels. The Summerland Research and Development Centre recently experienced a two-week power outage, including generator failure, and staff are still assessing impacts. Grape Day was held at UBCO on November 26, to provide updates on current SCAP projects. He also noted that internal research funding decisions from fall 2024 submissions have now been released.
- Kate also highlighted Grape Day, noting progress in smoke-taint mitigation research. On December 16, BC Wine Grape Council and Wine Growers BC will host a 2025 Vintage Seminar in Penticton and distribute a grower survey to capture experiences from this season. The Wine Grape Industry Task Force has received preliminary approval to move ahead with its long-term strategy. Kate added that feedback has been received from the Pest Management Regulatory Agency regarding the spray guide, and on industry's feedback on the bird deterrent consultation. She also noted that SWBC did not receive Agri-Assurance funding and will review its business model to broaden the membership base in the new fiscal year.
 - Alan asked about PMRA feedback and whether there have been discussions on drone spray applications. Adrian said conversations are ongoing, particularly around the differences between U.S. and Canadian regulations.
- Karen reported that grape yields are currently 20–50% above harvest estimates. The industry is encouraging consumers to buy BC and support local producers, while also working to address interprovincial tariff barriers affecting grape and wine movement.
- Dapinder reported a strong harvest this year. The BC Grapegrowers' Association worked to match growers with wineries to ensure BC grapes were prioritized over out-of-province fruit. He looks forward to the 2025 vintage survey results to understand how much fruit was imported into BC. He also shared that he is now managing the Starling Control Program. Populations increased this season, so it is important that the program continues. Updated starling communications materials will be developed under the CCLSP bird deterrents project.
- Bobby agreed that the sector is working through oversupply challenges and continuing to educate growers on planting and purchasing contracts.
 - Sukhpal asked whether BC grapes could be sent to other wine regions. Bobby said this is generally not feasible, as neighbouring regions also face oversupply. Bulk wine shipments may be possible but offer lower returns.
- Adrian shared that he is currently in Ottawa and has met with several federal agriculture critics and participated in discussions on business risk management. The BCFGA Vice President is also attending the Canada–Mexico bilateral meeting for the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. He also noted that BCFGA has received provincial funding and formed an apple working group, which will soon meet to develop a 2026 marketing strategy and guide fund allocation. He said BCFGA had a successful Ag Lobby Day, with follow-up meetings underway with local MLAs on key priorities. He has also been advocating provincially on an Ag Credit Corp proposal for a commodity load product, which came out of the Minister's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy. Finally, he expressed concern about the lack of consultation with industry ahead of the launch of the Enhanced Replant Program.

- Kate asked about the Canadian Agricultural Loans Act program. Adrian clarified that the commodity loan program being proposed is different, and in Ontario provides a prime-rate loan for up to 75% of the crop.
 - Michelle asked whether SIR could assist with BC apple marketing. Madeleine emphasized the value of highlighting SIR's environmental impact and how BC's production system differs from other regions.
- Alan said peach production and prices were strong this season. He noted ongoing issues with mislabelling of Washington apples and soft fruit as BC product at retail. He also highlighted that Kelowna was recently named a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, which presents a strong opportunity for small to medium diversified farms to connect with local chefs and retailers.
- Gord said the season was highly competitive, with aggressive pricing. At the same time, they saw higher cull rates and more quality issues than usual and are still determining the cause. As a result, they are being very careful about when they pack fruit. He added that their whole team is on high alert for mislabelling, and he has spoken with many produce and store managers in recent weeks.
 - Michelle asked whether the higher cull rates could be related to codling moth. Gord said they haven't seen major codling issues in the packinghouse and believes the problem is more likely due to fruit breakdown in bins, potentially from leaving fruit on the tree longer for colour or labour-related delays.
- Phil reported that the Premier's Task Force has completed its final recommendations, focusing on water, labour, land, and investment strategies. He noted the Minister's tour in September, which highlighted grape sector challenges, tree fruit packers, and provided an opportunity to connect with local growers. The Ministry has recently restructured under a new strategic framework and created a Programs and Services Branch to better coordinate initiatives across the Ministry and its partners. He added that the Enhanced Replant Program (ERP) is now in its second intake year. The tree fruit stream has recently closed, and the wine grape stream will close on December 15. The ERP Advisory Committee will meet soon to plan for year three based on this year's results.
 - Kate asked if the ERP webinars were recorded. Phil confirmed there are two recordings - one that walks through the application process and another that provides stream-specific details. Both are available on YouTube and the IAF website.
 - Adrian requested more coordination with industry partners on communications next year, particularly before deadlines close. He also suggested that the Ministry and IAF discuss who is best placed to lead the advisory group. Kate and Bobby supported the need for earlier notice of deadlines and better feedback mechanisms on program challenges.
 - Sukhpaul asked whether the announcement of the new plant health lab facility included any update on hiring a plant pathologist. Phil said there is no current staffing update and referred to earlier discussions about a letter of support from industry outlining this need.
- Madeleine reported that this season produced fewer large-sized apples, the opposite of last year. Late-summer heat caused fruit to mature quickly, leading to increased splitting.
- Michelle noted that SIR's 2026 parcel tax will be \$186/acre, and local governments also saw increases this year. SIR has also raised costs for their USA customers. This season, 86% of orchards recorded less than 0.02% codling moth damage.
 - Beth asked whether backyard trees remain a concern for codling moth and whether nurseries are engaged. Michelle explained that SIR runs a host tree registry, working with

nurseries to track backyard apple tree sales. Trees within 200 metres of a commercial apple and/or pear orchard are monitored by SIR staff.

- Sukhpaul said the cherry crop swung from the smallest in 2024 to the largest ever this year, partly because growers held back on pruning last winter to ensure a crop. Labour shortages remain challenging, with many growers dependent on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which brings added housing pressures during heavy crop years. Packing capacity was also a concern; the Algoma cherry line did not operate due to the mid-season sale, leaving many growers to find alternative packers.
 - Madeleine said she had difficulty accessing bees this season because hives were kept in cherry orchards longer than usual. She asked BCCA to remind growers to release bees after bloom, noting they are a shared resource. There may be an opportunity to include bee education at the AGM. She also noted that Walmart will require a bee pollinator addendum for food safety in 2026.
- Beth reported a busy export season due to the large cherry crop. There was an increase in spotted wing drosophila, likely because some growers reduced spraying last year during the small crop. Several orchards were removed from export programs because of high pest pressure. Heavy rain in the Creston area created issues with crop insurance due to inspection timings. She noted that the BCCA AGM will be held on March 6, and that the association expanded its domestic marketing program, including a lifestyle photoshoot to promote BC cherries.

5. **REGULAR BUSINESS**

5.1 CCLSP Committees & Communications

A written update was provided.

5.2 Stabilization Fund Report

Kellie walked the council through the status of the stabilization fund.

- Phil noted that the Ministry is considering a six-month extension to the MOU with IAF to support administration of the remaining project funds.
- Sukhpaul asked whether an extension is necessary for a small remaining amount, or if the funding could instead be allocated directly at the Council level. Kellie said extending the MOU aligns with the cross-commodity project timeline and is the most practical approach. She added that CCLSP expects to have enough leftover funding in the main budget to continue its work to March 2027 to complete wrap-up and reporting, if desired by industry.

5.3 Current Cross-Commodity Projects

A written update was provided for all CCLSP projects.

a) BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes progress report.

Kellie walked the Council through the progress report outlining the status of all activities and deliverables.

- Madeleine asked why a payment is being recommended if the project is currently under budget. Kellie noted that invoicing does not always match up with the payment schedule set by IAF. The project is currently under budget but spending is anticipated to increase soon.

Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal

Seconded by: Beth Cavers

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes Project Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$46,200.”

CARRIED

Philip and Michelle abstained from voting on the motion.

5.4 Cross-Commodity Project Development & Funding Applications

a) Coordinated Regional Labour Strategy, Policies, and Programs

Kellie walked the council through the project application and due diligence form, noting the project will end in 2027.

- Madeleine asked how the proposed structure differs from BC Fruit Works (BCFW). Adrian explained that BCFW involved the wrong mix of participants, while the new collaborative committee would mirror the Advisory Council model, bringing together people with labour experience. Each association would appoint two representatives, with BCGA providing staff support to move work forward. Kellie added that this project will focus on policy and research, noting that the recent labour research project produced 35 recommendations that industry currently lacks the capacity to advance. The shared oversight committee would serve as the governance structure, responsible for creating the workplan and strategy.
- Sukhpaul said this is a good opportunity to prioritize foreign labour needs, building on lessons learned from the domestic labour work.
- Alan pointed out an important policy component in the application related to visitor visas.
- Kellie emphasized that the project's funds cannot be used for advocacy. Instead, the shared position will conduct policy analysis and research, with findings handed off to associations to support their advocacy efforts.
- Sukhpaul suggested exploring and building relationships with countries that offer short-term contracts tailored to BC's needs.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Coordinated Regional Labour Strategy, Policies, and Programs TFISP application submitted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association with a maximum funding contribution of \$352,550 and a project timeline of December 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027.”

CARRIED

Philip and Adrian abstained from voting on the motion.

b) Industry Association Bylaw Review

Kellie walked the council through the project application and due diligence form, noting the project will have a customized approach for each participating association. The project will complement the Ministry's recent RFP for Board Training, ensuring associations can strengthen governance practices in a coordinated way. It would be valuable for each association to review and update their bylaws ahead of the training so they can fully benefit from the sessions. This approach will help ensure all associations are operating on a more even playing field moving forward.

- Kate asked about the timing of the Board Training RFP and how it aligns with this project. Phil said the RFP closes soon and he will request additional details to support alignment.
- Sukhpaul requested an amendment so associations that do not need a bylaw review can instead focus on governance structure. Adrian supported this suggestion and said the budget could be increased if needed.
- Bobby asked whether funding would be distributed equally. Kellie clarified that allocations will be based on need, not equal shares.
- Alan suggested a motion directing staff to revise the application and budget within two weeks and circulate it by email for approval.
- Kate suggested submitting the application as-is and preparing a separate governance-focused project. Alan recommended moving forward with a single aligned project to ensure bylaw updates stay connected to broader governance discussions. Kate noted potential alignment with the WGITF's organizational work.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Alan Gatzke

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council defer consideration of the Bylaw Review for Tree Fruit and Wine Grape Industry Associations TFISP application, submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program, for two weeks to allow staff to consider how to address the Council's request to broaden the application to include governance."

CARRIED

Philip and Michelle abstained from voting on the motion.

c) PAC Point Tracking Modernization

Kellie walked the council through the project application and due diligence form, noting the project will modernize the internal tracking process for the BCFGA and extend participation to wine grape growers.

- Alan suggested offering tracking services for non-members. Adrian clarified that BCFGA already tracks points for non-members on a fee-for-service basis. Kellie noted that this project focuses on the technical aspects of creating a modernized tracking system, but the BCFGA can work in parallel to develop a user-pay model. Shelby added that modernization work will allow members to be categorized by association, which will improve understanding of cost recovery from non-members.
- Philip asked how routine maintenance will be managed. Shelby explained that annual hosting and maintenance will be handled by the development team, with an internal schedule set jointly with

BCFGA. Annual costs are expected to be approximately \$2,500. Adrian confirmed that BCFGA will cover these ongoing costs.

Moved by: Beth Cavers

Seconded by: Bobby Ercego

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the PAC Point Tracking Modernization TFISP application submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program, subject to the program being inclusive for all BC tree fruit and grape growers, with a maximum funding contribution of \$55,125 and a project timeline of December 1, 2025, to August 31, 2026,

CARRIED

Philip and Michelle abstained from voting on the motion.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

a) 2026 Meeting Schedule

Meetings for 2026 will be held from on January 29, April 30, June 30, and December 15.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held in person on January 29 from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM.