

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held in-person on January 29, 2026.

PRESENT

Adrian Arts

Alan Gatzke

Dapinder Gill

Gord Morrison

Jesse MacDonald

Kate Durisek

Madeleine van Roechoudt

Michelle Cook

Nikki Callaway

Philip Gyug

Shirley Choi

Sukhpaul Bal

Walter Makepeace

BC Fruit Growers' Association

BC Fruit Growers' Association

BC Grapegrowers' Association

Consolidated Fruit Packers

Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

BC Wine Grape Council

Grower at Large

Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program

BC Wine Grape Council

BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food

Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

BC Cherry Association

Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program

REGRETS

Beth Cavers

Bobby Ercego

Karen Yeung

BC Cherry Association

BC Grapegrowers' Association

BC Wine Grape Council

STAFF

Kellie Garcia

Shelby Austen

CCLSP Project Director

CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Alan Gatzke

"THAT the January 29, 2026, meeting agenda be approved as presented."

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Adrian Arts

"THAT the November 27, 2025, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."

CARRIED

4. MEMBER ROUNDTABLE

- Phil mentioned that his team is focused on planning for 2026 in closer alignment with industry associations to help fill identified gaps. While Ministry budgets are tightening, there is still funding available for select projects in the Okanagan, and the Ministry is being more intentional about supporting large-scale producer events such as the Southern Interior Horticulture Show. He noted that Year 2 of the Enhanced Replant Program has closed, with preliminary commitments of 49 tree fruit projects covering 357 acres (\$1.5M) and 22 grape projects covering 272 acres (\$750K).
- Nikki noted a mild winter and shared a sense of renewed optimism across the industry, with stronger alignment and collaboration emerging between groups moving forward.
- Gord reported ongoing quality challenges and high cull rates in the apple sector. The industry has lost support from a large western buyer, who has shifted sourcing to Eastern Canada due to inconsistent apple quality. While demand for Canadian apples remains strong, maintaining consistent, high-quality fruit is critical.
 - Michelle asked whether pest or disease pressure contributed to quality issues. Gord said the issues were related to splitting, delayed picking, and volume pressures, not pests or disease. Michelle offered SIR support for pest and disease education if needed.
- Michelle shared that the SIR program is gearing up for the season. The Board has approved the budget, and the financial support from CCLSP was welcomed. The Board also approved tax increases and is working to diversify revenue sources, including increased costs to US customers.
 - Sukhpaul asked whether the tax increase affects the grower portion. Michelle explained that the Board approved an equal 10% increase to both the value tax and parcel tax, bringing the parcel tax to \$186 per acre for growers. She noted that without stabilization funding, the grower portion would have needed to increase further.
 - Adrian commented on negative perceptions around the value tax increase, noting that it amounts to roughly \$1 per household for the government portion. Michelle agreed that while impacts on growers and the public are considered, the Board aimed for a balanced approach this year.
 - Alan raised concerns about an increase in codling moth captures in the North Okanagan and Columbia Shuswap regions. Michelle noted ongoing challenges with cider operations, which can accept lower-quality fruit, and confirmed that identified hotspots will receive additional resources this season.
- Sukhpaul said the recent joint BCCA/BCFGA tree fruit meeting was productive and highlighted the need to plan ahead for the season. An unexpectedly large crop led to challenges with labour, housing, packing capacity, and trade. Powdery mildew has also re-emerged as issue, posing risks to export quality. He noted that Algoma reopening the BC Tree Fruits cherry packing line should help with packing capacity, but rising costs continue to threaten farm viability. He also shared that he will be participating in an upcoming Mexico trade mission to explore new market opportunities.
 - Adrian noted that powdery mildew is a key DAS model and asked about barriers to increasing cherry grower use of DAS. Sukhpaul suggested a more proactive alert system, such as monitoring DAS and pushing timely updates to growers, similar to the Regional District's Voyant alert system.
- Madeleine said late-summer heat and warm nights contributed to poor apple quality because keeping pace with harvest as fruit matured was challenging. She noted that the Global Club Access project will be highlighted at SIHS, and that her summer interview with Good Fruit Grower referenced the Access to Plant Materials project.

- Shirley shared that she continues to relay industry challenges to federal colleagues. She highlighted several market development opportunities, including the BC Agriculture and Food Export Program, now open until February 13, which supports trade shows, marketing materials, and digital marketing (early applications encouraged due to high demand). She also flagged the BC Farm Safety Program, which is currently open until fully subscribed.
- Jesse shared that there is an internal call for A-Base research project funding, and asked associations to submit any priority research topics for him to forward to researchers. He noted that industry support plays a significant role in funding decisions.
 - Sukhpaul requested research focused on mildew resistance.
 - Adrian asked about funding requirements and how to ensure research aligns with industry needs. Jesse explained that projects must align with current federal mandates, be national in scope, and demonstrate broad, multi-commodity impact. He added that packing and storability research may also fit well within this framework.
 - Kate asked about project timelines. Jesse said these are typically three-year projects.
 - Kellie offered to convene a meeting with commodity leads to better align priorities before submitting proposals for A-Base funding.
- Walt shared that he lost most of his tree fruit crop last season due to weather and had difficulty getting the remaining small crop packed. In contrast, he noted that his grape crop performed well last season.
- Adrian said he will be returning to Ottawa to continue discussions on how Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada is supporting growers. BCFGGA has rehired its lobbyist and is planning meetings with federal and provincial ministers, as well as MLAs. Advocacy efforts continue around Business Risk Management and labour. Current priorities include multi-lot insurance programs and exploring a backpacker labour program. The BCFGGA Annual General Meeting on February 26 will focus on labour, with representatives from Temporary Foreign Worker Program destinations and related programs attending to speak with growers. Adrian also noted upcoming tailgate sessions with Nutrien, covering topics such as thinning, aphid control, and harvest maturity.
- Alan commented on Algoma's recent grower meeting, noting a sense of cautious optimism in the industry. He also highlighted potential value-added opportunities, including collaboration with Algoma to ship culled product back east for juice processing.
- Dapinder said the BC Grapegrowers' Association Annual General Meeting is scheduled for February 10. The Board is currently finalizing the updated Executive Director position, with a candidate to be selected soon. Powdery mildew has been an issue in grapes following the small crop and reduced spraying, and BCGA would like to be involved in related discussions. He also flagged crown gall damage from recent winter injury as a research priority.
- Kate reported that BCWGC levy collections are underway, with the annual report expected by June 1. Work is ongoing to merge the BCWGC grower portal with BC Wine Authority and streamline registrations. The grape production guide is being updated and linked to BCDAS, particularly around pesticide timing. She also noted ongoing work with the WGITF, including developing a shared asset and tool library, participation in CCLSP's governance support project, and the hiring of a post-doctoral researcher to support the BCDAS expansion.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

5.1 CCLSP Committees & Communications

Shelby provided an update on recent committee and communications activities. Building Bridges 2026 replaced the January meeting of the Innovation and Extension Committee and brought 29 participants together to refine the cross-commodity knowledge transfer roadmap for 2026, with a formal roadmap now being developed. Work is ongoing with the WGIF, including organizational alignment and data strategy discussions related to BC DAS.

Communications work is focused on finalizing the 2025 Annual Review, preparing BC DAS engagement materials for the Southern Interior Horticulture Show, and delivering upcoming presentations to the SIR Board, the BC Cherry Association AGM, and the Southern Interior Horticulture Show, where two CCLSP projects will be featured. In addition, a new Advisory Council Highlights summary will be provided after each meeting to support Council members in sharing clear, consistent updates on CCLSP initiatives with their Boards.

- Sukhpaul asked whether there have been conversations about extending CCLSP. Kellie said staff are currently working on continuity planning. Madeleine suggested incorporating this discussion into the governance review process.

5.2 Stabilization Fund Report

Kellie informed the Council that the stabilization fund unallocated balance is \$38,912. She recommended that the Advisory Council request this amount be rolled into the regular CCLSP budget to be used for projects at the discretion of the Advisory Council.

- Kate asked what happens to underspent funds on current projects. Kellie confirmed that when a project is completed under budget the funding is moved back to the stabilization funding pot.
- Sukhpaul suggested using available funding to help cover BCAC forum admission costs for Council members when their association is unable to do so.

Moved by: Adrian Arts

Seconded by: Kate Durisek

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council recommends that the remaining stabilization fund balance of \$38,912 be rolled into the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project budget to be used for projects at the discretion of the Advisory Council.”

CARRIED

Philip, Jesse, and Shirley abstained from voting on the motion.

5.3 Current Cross-Commodity Projects

Written and verbal updates were provided for twelve CCLSP projects. Three projects required motions to approve reports and recommend release of funding.

a) ABAzyne Abiotic Stress Demonstration Trials for Cherries: Progress Report

Kellie referred the Council to the progress report outlining the status of all activities and deliverables. She noted that ABAzyne Bioscience will be presenting at the BCCA AGM.

- Kate asked about how ABAzyne Bioscience is dealing with challenges related to the costs of commercial infrastructure and scaling up the product for industry use. Kellie said ABAzyne has used

CCLSP funding to leverage additional funding and seems to be moving forward okay. She noted that they have achieved a ten-fold scale up of the product.

- Dapinder asked for clarification on the total spent on research and development for the product to date. Kellie said she will request this information.
- Adrian referenced ABAzyne's original proposal regarding a grower share system following industry investment in private R&D, and cautioned about avoiding potential conflicts of interest, particularly in discussions with local distributors. Kellie said she will follow up for information on whether industry has been invited to invest in the product.
- Shirley asked whether other organizations have contributed to the work ABAzyne Bioscience is doing. Kellie noted that ABAzyne is pursuing multiple partnerships and said she can request further details.

Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal

Seconded by: Alan Gatkze

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the ABAzyne Abiotic Stress Demonstration Trials for Cherries: Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$60,000."

CARRIED

Philip, Jesse, and Shirley abstained from voting on the motion.

b) BC Access to Plant Material: Final Report

Kellie referred the Council to the final report outlining the status of all activities and deliverables.

- Madeleine noted that this initiative is not a pilot and should be treated as the standard process for importing plant material, which needs to be clearly communicated to growers. Kellie said BCFGAs is developing a communications plan and next steps to support grower awareness and compliance, including a presentation at the Production Guide meeting.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

Seconded by: Kate Durisek

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the BC Access to Plant Material: Final Report submitted by the BC Fruit Growers' Association and recommends proceeding with a final payment of \$12,917."

CARRIED

Philip, Jesse, Shirley, and Adrian abstained from voting on the motion.

c) BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes

- Kate asked whether grapes pay separately for Washington State University (WSU) services or if they are included in the current agreement. Kellie confirmed that SIR has one agreement with WSU and has not had to pay more to expand to wine grapes.
- Sukhpaul asked whether WSU has a BC DAS for wine grapes and whether results could be shared in-kind. Kellie said WSU is in the early stages of expanding the platform to wine grapes and the BC project team is collaborating closely with them.

d) BC DAS Operations

- Madeleine suggested using the governance study to explore a membership levy model that could support shared industry resources such as DAS, starling control, and other programs.

e) Bird Deterrent Education and Outreach

- Adrian asked whether additional industry advocacy is needed on bird deterrents, including follow-up to the letter submitted to Health Canada regarding the [Consultation on Proposed Amendments to the Pest Control Products Regulations \(Pest Control Product Devices\) - Pre-consultation, PRO2025-02](#). Shelby confirmed that the consultation is now closed, and next steps are currently unknown.

f) Financial Support for Producer Portion of SIR Program Costs: Progress Report

Kellie referred the Council to the final report outlining the status of all activities and deliverables.

- Michelle noted that SIR received provincial funding in 2023–24, and during a meeting with Minister Popham, the SIR Board Chair was encouraged to seek future support through the stabilization fund. She added that she is working with the SIR Entomologist to research other sterile insect opportunities available for tree fruit and wine grape pests and will present their findings to the Council in June.

Moved by: Walter Makepeace

Seconded by: Adrian Arts

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Financial Support for the Producer Portion of SIR Program Costs Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$175,000.”

CARRIED

Philip, Jesse, Shirley, and Michelle abstained from voting on the motion.

g) Governance Support Services for Industry Associations

- Kate asked about the consultant for the governance review. Kellie confirmed she is preparing a Request for Proposals and will begin recruitment shortly. Adrian said this project presents a good opportunity for facilitated discussions to clarify roles and mandates across organizations. Kellie agreed, noting the importance of understanding both individual organizational roles and how partners work together collectively.

h) Herbicide Best Practices, Technology, and Extension

No discussion

i) Local Government Engagement

- Adrian noted that following RDCO’s denial of the delegation request, growers living within the RDCO are encouraged to write to their councillors. Sukhpaul said a letter to the RDCO Board Chair would be welcomed on behalf of the partners, and Madeleine offered to send a letter if a template is provided.

j) Tree Fruit Production Guide Modernization

No discussion

k) PAC Point Tracking Modernization

- Michelle asked about the development timeline. Shelby confirmed that the contractor is confident in a three-month turnaround, with the goal of having the system fully operational ahead of next year's event season.

l) Regional Labour Coordination

- Madeleine emphasized the importance of using the deliverables from the recent Domestic Labour Research Project as a baseline for future work.
- Alan noted that the Regional District of Central Okanagan's Economic Development Commission (COEDC) is currently conducting a Central Okanagan Workforce Profile and Strategy. Kellie added that CCLSP has already been contacted by COEDC regarding this work.

m) Research Briefs and Videos

No discussion.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. ADJOURNMENT

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