

# CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held in-person on April 30, 2026.

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## **PRESENT**

Adrian Arts  
Alan Gatzke  
Dapinder Gill  
Jesse MacDonald  
Karen Yeung  
Kate Durisek  
Michelle Cook  
Nikki Callaway  
Philip Gyug  
Sukhpaul Bal

BC Fruit Growers' Association  
BC Fruit Growers' Association  
BC Grapegrowers' Association  
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada  
BC Wine Grape Council  
BC Wine Grape Council  
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program  
BC Wine Grape Council  
BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food  
BC Cherry Association (Chair)

## **REGRETS**

Beth Cavers  
Walter Makepeace  
Gord Morrison  
Ryan Ostertag  
Shirley Choi  
Madeleine van Roechoudt

BC Cherry Association  
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program  
Consolidated Fruit Packers  
Consolidated Fruit Packers  
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada  
Grower at Large

## **STAFF**

Kellie Garcia  
Shelby Austen

CCLSP Project Director  
CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager

## **1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

## **2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Moved by: Alan Gatzke**

*"THAT the April 30, 2026, meeting agenda be approved as presented."*

**Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal**

**CARRIED**

## **3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal**

*"THAT the January 29, 2026, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."*

**Seconded by: Michelle Cook**

**CARRIED**

## **4. MEMBER ROUNDTABLE**

- Philip reported that the Ministry's budget has been reduced by \$17 million this year, primarily

affecting production insurance and expenditure management. Regionally, work is focused on improving farm profitability and decision-making, with extension teams finalizing roadmaps aligned with industry needs. Recent Ministry activities include releasing an interim post-harvest irrigation report for Creston, forming an internal access-to-capital working group to explore provincial loan tools, and planning regional success-story videos. The Ministry is also working to share the 2017–2022 tree fruit profitability report in a more accessible format, launching bi-weekly vineyard production update videos, and hosting a town hall on May 19 to share findings from the completed table grape opportunity assessment. Additional work includes supporting drought working groups with the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) and collaborating with the District of Lake Country on agricultural policy and Official Community Plan updates.

- Kellie asked whether the extension roadmap development has been aligned with the Cross-Commodity Knowledge Transfer roadmap used by industry. Phil confirmed that it is being used to help align efforts.
- Kellie asked when the drought working group is expected to launch. Phil noted that timing is still dependent on confirmation from WLRS and that they are awaiting further direction.
- Sukhpaul shared that Beth is attending the Canadian Produce Marketing Association Annual Convention and Trade Show and that the BCCA is again sponsoring the Cherry Blossom Triathlon. He reported that while the winter was mild and spring started early, the region has experienced multiple spring frost events resulting in orchard damage; however, it is still too early to assess the overall impact. He also represented the BCCA at the Mexico trade mission in February and shared that work is ongoing with Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) on the cherry market access file.
- Michelle reported that SIR is now in full-season mode, with moth releases underway across all regions. Wild moth catches were detected last week in the south Okanagan and this week in Kelowna. The first sales to Washington occurred last week. Traps are in place, and the team is working with CFIA on adjustments to support growers exporting to Taiwan.
  - Sukhpaul asked for an update on the new facility manager. Michelle confirmed that the position has been filled and that the new hire is currently training under the existing facility manager through the end of 2027. She noted that training is going well and that the new person holds a PhD in entomology and has experience at other insect-rearing facilities.
- Kate reported that BCWGC is currently in levy collection and audit season, with data transitioning to an annual crop assessment targeted for release by June 1. BCWGC is also working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to launch a living acreage report covering 2017–2026, highlighting what is being planted, removed, and actively producing. An in-person Research and Development Committee meeting is scheduled for June 18 at the Summerland Research and Development Centre, and grower field days featuring Living Labs will take place June 9–10 in collaboration with the Ministry and the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society. The BCWGC Annual General Meeting will be held virtually on August 13. Additional BCWGC work includes collaboration with Okanagan College to convert production guide information into short courses and micro-credentials for industry. SWBC is remodelling its viticulture certification program and is exploring development of an SWBC member hub to better share events, knowledge, and resources. The Wine Grape Industry Task Force has issued five RFPs across its working groups, and work has begun on a long-term industry strategy with Deloitte. Two new Mitacs projects are underway: one

focused on harvest-level grape chemistry for sparkling wine production, and a second collaborative project with CCLSP to support BC DAS grape models and review other decision-support tools.

- Dapinder reported that BCGA is updating its website, with a new buy-and-sell page for grapes as a priority. BCGA has participated with CCLSP in presentations to RDNO and RDOS and continues to highlight the starling control program, including requests for additional funding to replace 10 traps and cover increased operating costs. BCGA's irrigation and contracts workshop is scheduled for May 28 from 1–4 pm at Kismet Winery.
- Karen reported that the South Okanagan did not experience significant frost damage and is seeing good fruit set, with expectations of a normal wine grape crop. She recently met with the Resilient Agriculture Initiative team, which is reviewing policy and potential reforms for the next round of SCAP funding. Discussions focused on whether government priorities are aligned with industry needs. Karen highlighted the importance of this engagement, noting that interior horticulture is often underrepresented at BCAC compared to livestock and poultry, and flagged interprovincial trade and waste management as key concerns.
- Alan shared that he values the collaboration within the group, noting it helps build understanding and improve communication across the valley. Regarding frost impacts, he reported minimal and variable effects on soft fruits, with apricot thinning already underway in the South. In the North, he noted differences by location and variety, with older varieties showing strong fruit set while some newer varieties are thinner, though no permanent damage has been observed. He also highlighted emerging interest in the use of drones for frost prevention through temperature mixing and suggested this is an area worth further exploration. Additionally, he noted that within the direct farm marketing community, established retail operations are seeing increases in fruit sales revenue.
- Adrian reported that BCFGGA is undertaking an economic impact study to update the Ministry's original Deloitte assessment from the first year of the stabilization process and will engage BCWGC and WGBC during the work. BCFGGA will attend the Union of BC Municipalities Convention this year and welcome input from the Interior Horticulture sector on messaging and engagement. He also shared updates on recent and upcoming labour and finance initiatives, including recognition of the Jamaican Liaison Service's 60th anniversary of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, hosting the Jamaican Minister of Labour and Social Services in July, meetings planned with Ministers Popham and Whiteside on labour issues, and a forthcoming meeting with financial lenders and government on farm finances. In addition, BCFGGA is collaborating with the National Farmers Union on a national letter campaign addressing retail consolidation. Lastly BCFGGA has launched weekly 30-minute industry horticulturist calls, identified through the Building Bridges conference, to share timely updates from stakeholders across the valley.
- Jesse reported that apple growth is variable at this stage and that cherry assessments have not yet been completed. With the new fiscal year beginning April 1, project funding is now being rolled out. The Living Labs project has concluded, with ongoing discussions focused on data synthesis and reporting. The apple exclusion netting trial is wrapping up this year, and results from a virus trial initiated two years ago are expected to be shared. The CRAVEO project remains in the procurement phase. Jesse also asked whether there would be interest in organizing a tour of the research station for members of the new horticulture group.
  - Michelle noted that SIR's new entomologist has ideas for potential research collaboration and asked who she should connect with at AAFC. Jesse confirmed that Michelle can reach

out through SIR's AAFC Board representative, himself, or directly to AAFC entomologist Chandra Moffat.

## **5. REGULAR BUSINESS**

### **5.1 CCLSP Committees & Communications**

Shelby provided an update on recent committee and communications activities. The Innovation and Extension Committee has begun using the seasonal knowledge transfer roadmap developed at the January Building Bridges workshop. The 2025 Annual Review was completed and featured in the spring issue of *Orchard and Vine* magazine, highlighting strong stakeholder feedback on the value of cross-commodity collaboration and prompting exploration of future collaboration options beyond CCLSP. Local government engagement continued with a third bus tour in the Kelowna area, followed by distribution of a summary report to participants. A joint letter from the Interior Horticulture Sector was sent to Minister Popham requesting the strategic rehiring of a plant pathologist within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Staff also participated in and supported several industry events, including the Southern Interior Horticulture Show, industry association AGMs, and the District of Lake Country irrigation management workshop.

- Adrian complimented the Building Bridges event and the seasonal knowledge transfer roadmap, noting that it has helped keep BCFGA accountable and has contributed to the organization hosting nine knowledge-transfer events so far this season.
- Sukhpaul shared positive feedback on the Kelowna agriculture bus tour, highlighting strong engagement and participation from senior City of Kelowna staff and noting that local government engagement remains a key priority for the agriculture sector.
- Adrian informed the group that following receipt of the letter to Minister Popham, he received a call from the Minister's office expressing surprise that the issue had not been flagged earlier. He noted that the following day, AAFC reached out to initiate further discussions around industry needs and improved collaboration at the local, provincial, and federal levels.

### **5.2 Current Cross-Commodity Projects**

#### **a) Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project: Progress Report**

**Moved by: Kate Durisek**

**Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal**

*"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project: Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$225,000."*

**CARRIED**

Philip and Jesse abstained from voting on the motion.

#### **b) ABAzyne Research and Trials**

No discussion.

#### **c) BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes: Progress Report**

- Sukhpaul asked about long-term plans for DAS and its expansion, particularly given recent investments. Kellie responded that a steering committee is in place and that developing a

sustainable funding model is a priority, with CCLSP actively exploring options including expansion to other commodities. Kate added that the Mitacs researcher will be evaluating available decision-support tools as part of this work.

**Moved by: Adrian Arts**

**Seconded by: Sukhpaul Bal**

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

**CARRIED**

Philip and Jesse abstained from voting on the motion.

**d) BC DAS Operations**

No discussion.

**e) Bird Deterrent Education and Outreach**

No discussion.

**f) Financial Support for Producer Portion of SIR Program Costs**

Michelle reported that work has begun to assess the use of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) for additional pests and commodities in the Okanagan, with a summary report in development. She noted connections with a Quebec group running an SIT program for onion fly and shared that Biocentis has been approved to present to the SIR Board on SIT for spotted wing drosophila. Biocentis is exploring potential partnerships with SIR, including CFIA lab trials and possible cherry grower field trials. The presentation will take place at the June 12 Board meeting, with partners invited to attend.

- Alan asked whether onion fly affects other crops, noting significant onion acreage near Cache Creek. Michelle confirmed that onion fly is a pest of allium crops.

**g) Governance Support Services for Industry Associations**

No discussion.

**h) Herbicide Technology, Best Practices, and Extension: Progress Report**

**Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal**

**Seconded by: Alan Gatzke**

*“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Herbicide Technology & Education: Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$16,000.”*

**CARRIED**

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

**i) Local Government Engagement**

No discussion.

**j) Tree Fruit Production Guide Modernization (BCFGA)**

No discussion.

**k) PAC Point Modernization**

- Michelle asked whether the system would continue to be managed by BCFGAs once it is launched. Adrian confirmed that BCFGAs will manage the process moving forward, noting that while the original discussion stemmed from time and resource constraints, the updated system will improve cost recovery and reduce staff time. He also shared that the membership coordinator has returned from maternity leave and is enthusiastic about the new system.
- Kate flagged the importance of including grapes once the system is launched. Shelby noted that scalability has been a key consideration throughout the system’s development to support inclusion of additional commodities.
- Sukhpaul asked how the new collection process will work. Shelby explained that each event added to the system will have a unique QR code. After attending, producers will scan the code, enter their PAC number and email, and points will be automatically added to their online profile. Adrian noted that digital collection will also help prevent fraudulent collections from growers who did not attend the training.

**l) Regional Labour Coordination**

No discussion.

**m) Research Briefs and Videos: Progress Report**

- Michelle asked where the final briefs will live. Shelby said they will live in the BC Food Web’s library, but partners are allowed to post and distribute as they wish.
- Adrian asked how this project intersects with the Ministry’s research brief contract. Kellie noted that they are separate contracts for the same service.

**Moved by: Kate Durisek**

**Seconded by: Michelle Cook**

*“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the Research Briefs & Videos: Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$57,540.”*

**CARRIED**

Philip and Jesse abstained from voting on the motion.

**6. OTHER BUSINESS**

**6.1 Drought planning and response**

Kellie informed the Council that she is developing an industry action plan to support navigation of the upcoming drought, with a focus on avoiding duplication of efforts already underway by the Ministry and the Okanagan Basin Water Board. Planned actions include drafting a letter to Minister Neill outlining drought-related concerns, participating on regional drought response teams, and supporting industry associations with coordinated communications. The letter will specifically address the unique risks faced by perennial agriculture.

- Kellie asked about the current status of the Black Mountain Irrigation District. Sukhpaul reported that high-elevation reservoirs are expected to fill.
- Jesse noted that the District of Summerland has circulated a rate schedule related to water overages.

- Phil shared that internal discussions are underway on how extension services can better support producers and help them understand their role within the broader water management context and noted interest in collaborating with this group.
- Adrian reported that two individuals have volunteered to host irrigation tailgate sessions over the next month.

## **6.2 Continuity planning for cross-commodity collaboration**

Kellie reported that a modified Partners Table met last week, expanded to include Board members from multiple organizations to discuss continuity planning. The goal is to explore future collaboration models that meet industry needs beyond 2026. Work on continuity planning is underway, and Kellie expects to bring proposed options and recommendations to the Council meeting in June.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held in person on June 30 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.