

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

PRESENT

Adrian Arts
Alan Gatzke
Gord Morrison
Jesse MacDonald
Karen Yeung
Madeleine van Roechoudt
Philip Gyug
Shirley Choi
Veronica Vinge
Walter Makepeace

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

REGRETS

Beth Cavers
Dapinder Gill
Kate Durisek
Michelle Cook
Sukhpaul Bal

BC Cherry Association
BC Grapegrowers' Association
BC Wine Grape Council
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
BC Cherry Association (Chair)

STAFF

Kellie Garcia
Shelby Austen
Pegah Behroozi

CCLSP Project Director
CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager
BC Fruit Growers' Association

GUEST

Evan Esch

Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Walter Makepeace

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

Seconded by: Adrian Arts

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechoudt

"THAT the April 30, 2026, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."

Seconded by: Alan Gatzke

CARRIED

4. **MEMBER ROUNDTABLE**

- Adrian shared that BCFGA welcomed the recent federal investment announcement for agriculture, although much appeared to be focused on greenhouse and processing sectors. BCFGA continues to advance its efforts to reduce retail consolidation and has circulated a support letter to 140 industry associations, seeking endorsements for a national advocacy campaign. Recent meetings have included discussions with CPMA on labour, replanting, and agricultural water infrastructure funding; Farm Credit Canada leadership on supporting the next generation of farmers; and AAFC's new Assistant Deputy Minister regarding collaboration opportunities with the Science and Technology Branch and concerns about the vacant plant pathologist position. Water management remains a key focus, with ongoing engagement with ministers regarding reduced water allocations across the valley. BCFGA also co-hosted a town hall with the City of Kelowna. They also continue to move forward with their apple marketing initiative, including finalizing a logo.
 - Alan asked what role local governments can play in addressing water challenges. Adrian noted that the issue is multifaceted and includes the need for infrastructure investment, as well as clearer prioritization of water allocations across different crop types and agricultural sectors.
 - Philip shared that the North Okanagan Regional Agrologist has been working closely with the RDNO to explore options for increasing water availability for producers. Current discussions include the use of reclaimed water and recommissioning wells that are unsuitable for drinking water but could be used for irrigation. He noted that it is still too early to determine how much additional water may become available.
 - Philip asked about BCFGA's plans regarding retail consolidation advocacy. Adrian explained that the initiative is based on the Competition Bureau's 2024 report, which identified five pillars for a fairer and more competitive retail sector. BCFGA has circulated a support letter to 140 industry associations seeking endorsements and organizational logos for a national advocacy campaign. Once sufficient support is secured, the organization plans to launch a broader campaign aimed at gaining support from MPs, MLAs, and the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.
 - Veronica asked whether there would be value in BCWGC, WGBC, and BCGA supporting the initiative collectively. Adrian agreed, noting that together they represent a significant portion of the Interior horticulture sector and could strengthen the advocacy effort.
 - Shirley noted that one objective of the National Food Security Strategy is to improve grocery sector competition and asked how this aligns with BCFGA's initiative. Adrian responded that the efforts are complementary but emphasized that BCFGA's focus is on strengthening local food systems, including food hubs, food security, and improving producers' ability to negotiate terms within the supply chain. Shirley also highlighted the recently announced Food Fund Link program, which supports food hubs, food terminals, and independent grocers. Adrian noted that this type of investment would be beneficial to the sector.
- Walt noted that SIR is operating at full capacity for the season and recently hosted a delegation from Biocentis to discuss the potential use of SIT for spotted wing drosophila. From a production perspective, he noted that cherry development is running approximately two weeks ahead of normal

timing. While a late frost caused significant soft fruit losses, grape crops in the South appear to be performing well, with no major drought concerns observed to date.

- Madeleine stated that her crop was not significantly affected by spring frost. She also noted that Lake Country is currently under a voluntary 10% water reduction.
- Phil reported that drought preparedness and producer support remain major priorities. Ministry staff are assisting with agricultural impact assessments and supporting regional response efforts, including collaboration with RDNO and local irrigation districts. Voluntary water reduction notices are expected to be issued in additional areas, with Temporary Protection Orders potentially being considered later in the season. Producer outreach continues through tailgates, workshops, and town halls, including an upcoming July 6 event in Vernon focused on reclaimed water for irrigation. Extension staff are advancing several initiatives, including water efficiency case studies, on-farm demonstrations, social media outreach, and updates to the Tree Fruit and Wine Grape Production Guides. Planning for the Southern Interior Horticultural Show is underway, and work continues on ERP program planning ahead of a fall intake. Phil also noted that the tree fruit profitability report is in the final stages of its dissemination plan, Summerland water users are sharing meter data to support water-use forecasting, and a new Apple Post-Harvest Support Project has been approved to help packers improve business processes.
 - Evan offered to send the reclaimed water tailgate information to all SIR North Okanagan growers.
- Alan mentioned that the apricot harvest in Osoyoos is nearly complete due to a combination of light crop loads and seasonal weather conditions. He noted exceptionally strong prices, with apricots and early freestone peaches reaching approximately \$1,000 per bin, compared to more typical peach prices of \$300-\$400 per bin. Early cherry pricing has stabilized at approximately \$55 per 20 lb box. Alan also reported significant prune and plum crop losses in the South due to weather impacts. He noted that market intelligence for direct marketers is often not widely shared and could be valuable in helping smaller farms remain competitive.
- Gord shared that Canadian retailers are now strongly supporting local cherry production and are committed to sourcing Canadian fruit where possible. He noted that early apples have begun entering the market and that providing pricing and supply estimates to retailers remains a challenge when building seasonal programs. Gord expressed support for ongoing industry advocacy efforts and emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent fruit quality throughout the supply chain.
- Jesse noted that much of his recent work has focused on drought-related outreach and tailgate sessions, including participation in the recent BCAC Agriculture Forum tour at the Summerland Research and Development Centre (SRDC). Plans are underway to host another Cherry Day with BCCA and BCFGA later this summer, followed by an Apple Day in the fall. He noted that the success of commodity-focused field days has attracted attention from policy staff in Eastern Canada and may help support similar initiatives at other research stations. The Triggs Lecture Series, organized by Brock University, is expected to be hosted in part at SRDC on August 12. An SRDC open house is planned for September 19. He also noted that SRDC secured approximately 10% of projects funded nationally through the most recent A-base funding intake, with the next proposal stage now underway for projects beginning in April 2027. In addition, funding has been secured for a pilot study on apple soft scald aimed at generating data to support a larger future research project.

- Adrian asked whether Lindsay King had been consulted on the soft scald project, noting that she is also working on the issue with the same grower. Jesse said he was not aware of her involvement and will connect with her to coordinate efforts.
- Karen reported that June has been focused on Wine Grape Industry Task Force activities, including finalizing proposals and committee updates. A key priority remains organizational alignment across industry partners. She noted that the BCWGC Annual General Meeting will be held virtually on August 13, and the Canadian Grape and Wine Council will visit BC from August 11-14. BCWGC is also working with AAFC to help coordinate the Triggs Lecture Series and recently met with the Investment Agriculture Foundation to discuss how water infrastructure programs can better align with grower needs.
- Shirley highlighted the release of [Canada's first National Food Security Strategy](#), which includes a \$3 billion investment over 10 years focused on increasing grocery sector competition, boosting food production, supporting food innovation, and reducing regulatory barriers within the food system. She noted opportunities under the AgriMarketing Program's diversification streams, which support trade diversification and market access for [small and medium-sized businesses](#) and [industry associations](#). She also shared that the Italian Trade Agency will be bringing agricultural technology manufacturers to the Okanagan in September to explore opportunities to support industry needs.
- Veronica reported that BCGA recently hosted an irrigation and contracts workshop in the South and is exploring the opportunity to offer a similar session at the Southern Interior Horticultural Show, with another virtual workshop planned for January. Planning is also underway for a Grower Day event later this summer. Current advocacy priorities include the Enhanced Replant Program and concerns related to French vine imports and their impacts on growers. BCGA has communicated to Minister Popham that significant fruit volumes may be entering the market without adequate processing or marketing capacity. BCGA also met with representatives of the proposed Canadian Wine Museum initiative.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

5.1 CCLSP Committees & Communications

Shelby provided an update on recent committee and communications activities. The Innovation and Extension Committee met on June 4 and continues to use the seasonal knowledge transfer roadmap to coordinate activities and track progress. To date, 45 activities have been completed, 27 are underway, and 3 are on hold, with recent efforts focused on water, nutrient, and pest management, business planning, and local government engagement. The roadmap approach has been well received and is improving coordination and accountability across organizations. With regards to communications, BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes and Global Club Access for BC Growers were featured in the [May issue](#) of Country Life in BC. A news release drafted on behalf of the BCFGa for the regional labour coordinator project resulted in coverage in multiple outlets such as The Grower and Castanet. CCLSP staff continue to engage in key industry events and discussions, including water-focused field days, town halls, grower workshops, and the recent BCAC agriculture forum.

- Adrian noted that BCFGa has received seven interview requests following the news release and is seeing strong interest in the Interior labour initiative. Kellie added that the release was originally drafted following the KPU study and was held until there was a tangible update to share.
- Kellie shared that the East Kelowna town hall was organized in response to limited local engagement ahead of planned water reductions. By offering to co-host with the City of Kelowna, the group was able to move quickly and successfully engage approximately 85 participants.
- Phil noted that the Ministry has a small amount of funding available to support tailgate sessions and similar events, which can be used to cover costs such as venue, food, or speakers.

5.2 Current Cross-Commodity Projects

a) ABAzyne Research and Trials

Kellie reported that the research team submitted all regulatory materials requested by CFIA at the end of May, including toxicology data, label development, and fruit residue analysis, and is now awaiting a response on certification. ABAzyne Bioscience has also secured an additional \$650,000 in grant funding to support production of product for field trials, with a target of covering approximately 50 acres. A project coordinator will be hired to manage the trials, and collaboration with industry associations will be needed to identify suitable trial sites in the Okanagan. Proposed crops for trials include cherries, wine grapes, and peaches. Interest has also been expressed by Ontario for table grapes and by Perennia in Nova Scotia for blueberries.

b) BC DAS Expansion to Wine Grapes: Progress Report

No discussion.

c) BC DAS Operations: Progress Report

Kellie walked the group through the progress report and draft funding and delivery plan for BC DAS. She outlined current and proposed delivery models and potential funding structures and presented three scenarios: a minimum viable product, a steady-state model, and an enhanced model, with the goal of securing funding agreements over a five-year term. Staff will develop funding requests that include the infographic and supporting letter to clearly communicate the value of DAS and support funding requests.

- Madeleine commended the prioritization of the steady-state model.
- Evan suggested exploring an opportunity to renegotiate pricing with WSU for BC DAS, noting that the recent disruption with Environment Canada station data could provide leverage. Kellie agreed that 2027 may be an appropriate time to revisit this discussion.

Moved by: Madeleine van Roechooldt

Seconded by: Adrian Arts

“THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the BC DAS Operations Progress Report submitted by the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends proceeding with an interim payment of \$40,000.”

CARRIED

Philip and Jesse abstained from voting on the motion.

d) Bird Deterrent Education and Outreach

No discussion.

e) Financial Support for Producer Portion of SIR Program Costs

Evan presented SIR's research on providing Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) for other pests and commodities in the region. He also noted SIR's recent delegation from Biocentis on SIT for spotted wing drosophila. The current barrier for genetic modified bugs is the regulation pipeline. SIR would like to propose a meeting following cherry season with BCCA, BCFGA, growers, and cherry/berry scientists to go over pros/cons of approach and feasibility. Biocentis is looking for letters of support to give to donors and investors saying that Canadian cherry/berries want to work on registration.

Based on SIR's research, area-wide integrated pest management approaches may be effective for managing significant pest pressures, although regional coordination is generally only warranted when pest impacts reach a sufficient scale. The research also identified the need to monitor developments in mating disruption for grape mealybug and evaluate its potential to reduce grape leafroll virus transmission. Further investigation of SIT for spotted wing drosophila in BC was recommended.

- Madeleine asked about oriental fruit moth (OFM), noting it is not currently present in the region but likely could be in the future. Evan responded that mating disruption is highly effective for OFM, as it disrupts the mating pathway, but noted uncertainty around how this could be implemented as an area-wide program. Madeleine suggested engaging AAFC researchers to help prioritize local studies.
- Jesse asked about management challenges for apple clearwing moth. Evan noted that SIT is likely not feasible for this pest due to the difficulty of mass rearing a wood-boring insect. He added that previous AAFC research on mating disruption had mixed or unclear outcomes, but SIR would be interested in supporting implementation if a viable solution is identified.
- Adrian asked about opportunities to rear beneficial insects, such as lacewings. Evan referenced an example in South Africa where a company producing biopesticides for false codling moth uses surplus egg production to rear parasitoids as a biological control agent. He noted there may be potential to explore a similar model for codling moth, with possible added benefits for leafroller control.
- Evan emphasized that SIR is not a research organization and is not positioned to lead the research required for these initiatives. Madeleine highlighted the importance of ongoing collaboration with AAFC scientists, and Evan confirmed that SIR is working to build those relationships, including an upcoming tour of the SIR facility with AAFC researchers.

f) Governance Support Services for Industry Associations

No discussion.

g) Herbicide Technology & Extension

No discussion.

h) Local Government Engagement

Kellie walked the Council through the Local Government Engagement and Advocacy Strategy.

- Alan suggested a two-pronged advocacy approach that combines both grassroots and senior-level engagement. He noted that building awareness among farmers, local governments, and community leaders could help generate support from the ground up while also influencing decision-makers at higher levels.
- Veronica suggested complementing a candidate forum with a questionnaire for election candidates, with responses shared publicly to help identify agriculture-supportive candidates and inform future advocacy efforts. She also noted that Chambers of Commerce could be valuable partners in hosting candidate forums.
- Madeleine emphasized the importance of educating local governments about agriculture, noting that many elected officials do not have agricultural backgrounds. She stressed the value of helping decision-makers better understand the realities of farming and the people and livelihoods behind the industry.
- Adrian noted that while BCFGA remains non-partisan and does not participate in partisan politics, it does engage in local government elections and advocacy. He suggested supporting candidates who include agriculture in their platforms through awareness and communication efforts. He also highlighted the Mayor of Summerland as an example of a strong agricultural ally who became more engaged following a recent bus tour and has since been actively working with the Province, BCFGA, and other industry stakeholders. Adrian agreed that both top-down and bottom-up engagement are important components of effective advocacy.

i) Tree Fruit Production Guide Modernization (BCFGA)

Adrian provided an update on the Tree Fruit Production Guide modernization project, noting that the project remains on schedule and has completed the planning phase. The next stage will focus on content review, restructuring the guide framework, and completing a comprehensive update of the resource. Approximately 100 stakeholders have been re-engaged to support the process. A consultant has completed an initial review of the guide's 680 pages and provided feedback throughout, with technical content now being reviewed by Ministry PAgS. Adrian noted that the absence of a plant pathologist has significantly increased workload pressures and impacted staff capacity to support the project.

j) PAC Point Modernization

- Madeleine asked about manual sign-in options. Shelby confirmed that manual processes will remain available for both PAC point collection and recertification payments, while the new system is intended to gradually increase digital adoption over time.

- Adrian noted that staff are very excited about the new system and the efficiencies it is expected to provide.

k) Regional Labour Coordination

No discussion.

l) Research Briefs and Videos: Progress Report

No discussion.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Drought Response Update

No discussion. Updates provided during the roundtable under agenda item no 4.

6.2 Continuity planning for cross-commodity collaboration update

Kellie reported that a collaboration plan has been developed with input from the project partners. As outlined in the MOU with IAF, CCLSP will conclude in December, and partners are exploring options to continue cross-commodity collaboration through a new structure. A Partners Table meeting is scheduled for July 21, after which broader feedback will be sought.

An option under consideration is a shared coordinator position, housed within one of the partner organizations and jointly funded by participating groups. The coordinator would support cross-commodity collaboration and report to a partner-led board composed of organization presidents and senior staff, replacing the current Advisory Council structure. Key priorities would include coordinating local government engagement, delivering the knowledge transfer roadmap, managing cross-commodity programs, and aligning industry positions ahead of meetings with organizations such as BCAC and FVGC.

6.3 Direct farm marketing opportunities

Alan brought forward a discussion on direct farm marketing opportunities, supported by a memo prepared by CCLSP staff. The discussion focused on how direct farm marketing can help farms diversify revenue, capture greater value from their products, and improve long-term viability. The Okanagan was identified as well positioned for this approach due to its strong agricultural base, existing value-added businesses, farm gate sales, and agri-tourism activities. Potential next steps include hosting a virtual workshop, incorporating direct farm marketing discussions into existing industry events, or developing a dedicated workshop focused on diversification opportunities, practical examples, and regulatory considerations.

- Walt emphasized that diversification and direct farm marketing can be important pathways to success for younger farmers, particularly given the challenges of traditional commodity production. Alan agreed, noting that direct farm marketing events often attract strong participation from young people interested in agriculture.

- Veronica highlighted the importance of connecting consumer demand with local agricultural production. She noted that helping consumers understand the value of purchasing local, seasonal products can strengthen support for growers while enabling farmers to better respond to market demand. She stressed the importance of understanding market opportunities before production decisions are made.
- Shirley noted that the annual Wine Insights Conference includes sessions focused on marketing, customer development, and agritourism, and suggested there may be opportunities for collaboration or shared learning for the horticulture sector. Alan expressed interest in learning more about the conference and shared examples of how value-added processing can help extend marketing opportunities for perishable products.
- Adrian highlighted ongoing work at the Summerland Food Hub, which is being developed as a marketplace to connect local food producers with the community. He emphasized that there is room for both large and small farm business models in the industry and encouraged further discussion on diversification opportunities. Shirley added that small-scale food producers could also be valuable resources and partners in these conversations.
- Kellie agreed that a direct farm marketing session or panel at the Southern Interior Horticulture Show would be a strong starting point for further discussion and knowledge sharing. She noted that CCLSP could provide staff support to help coordinate discussions through the Southern Interior Horticulture Show and any future virtual events.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held virtually on August 27 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM.