



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
AVOCADO INSPECTION COMMITTEE (AIC)**

**March 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference**

2399 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833

REMOTE MEMBERS

PRESENT

John Schaap – Chair
Aaruni Thakur – Vice Chair
Hillary DeCarl
Bailey Diiioia
Stewart Lockwood
Jed Harrison

INTERESTED PARTIES

Keith Blanchard – Index Fresh
April Aymami – California Avocado
Commission

CDFA

Danny Lee
Stacey Hughes
Steve Patton
Sam Santander
Marcee Yount
Kristi Garcia
Julie Lee

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Kristi Garcia. Roll was called and a quorum was established.

ITEM 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 3: REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Schaap requested a motion to approve the September 10, 2024, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

MOTION: Hillary DeCarl moved to approve the September 10, 2024 Meeting Minutes as presented. Vice Chair Aaruni Thakur seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions. Bailey Diiioia was not present for this motion.

ITEM 4: COMMITTEE VACANCY AND TERMS REPORT

Garcia provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report. Current vacancies included one Handler Member Alternate and one Grower Member Alternate. Handler Members Bailey Diiioia and Hilary DeCarl are both eligible to serve their second terms, commencing on June 1, 2025. Grower Member Stewart Lockwood will be terming out on May 31, 2025.

ITEM 5: REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED CDFA FISCAL YEAR 2025/26 BUDGET

Sam Santander presented the Proposed CDFA FY 2025/26 Budget. The proposed budget included \$223,259 for personal services; \$78,724 for operating expenses and equipment; a gas tax credit of \$4,980; and a pro rata cash adjustment of \$6,511, for a total budget of \$303,514.

Chair Schaap asked for a motion to approve the CDFA Proposed Budget for FY 2025/26 as presented.

MOTION: Stewart Lockwood moved to approve the Proposed CDFA FY 2025/26 Budget as presented. Chair John Schaap seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 6: FOREIGN COUNTRY MATURITY REQUIREMENTS AND U.S. GRADE STANDARDS

Chair Schaap shared findings on Mexico's avocado maturity standards following a request during a previous meeting. Mexico requires a minimum 21 percent dry matter content for avocados entering the United States (U.S.), though growers often aim for 24 percent in-field to ensure quality. Certification is performed by local agencies, and if fruit fails, harvesting is delayed by two weeks. Once approved, fruit is harvested, retested, and shipped. If a non-compliance occurs, severe penalties are enforced. Inspections performed on imported avocados by United States Department of Agriculture and CDFA at the port of entry in the U.S. focus on pests, size, and grade but not maturity. Santander added that the Avocado Inspection Program performs random testing on imported avocados to ensure they meet California maturity standards. Maturity exemptions for certain imported avocado varieties were also clarified.

ITEM 7: REVIEW OF AVOCADO INSPECTION PROGRAM GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Stacey Hughes presented a guide for the Avocado Inspection Program. The document includes program and personnel history, statutory changes, including the 1982 shift from oil content to dry matter standards, and processes for establishing new variety release dates. It outlines a typical three-year study process for new varieties and includes links to applicable statutes and research resources. Committee responsibilities were also clarified, including topics like Price Look Up (PLU) codes falling outside their jurisdiction. The committee discussed roles in initiating studies and possible funding sources, such as the Avocado Commission or the committee's own budget.

ITEM 8: PROGRAM UPDATES

Santander stated that there were no current program updates.

ITEM 9: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, September 9, 2025, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., via Zoom.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m. by Chair Schaap.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sam Santander, Program Supervisor
Inspection and Compliance Branch
Inspection Services