



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

**March 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference**

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

REMOTE MEMBERS

PRESENT

Stewart Lockwood – Chair
John Schaap – Vice Chair
Hillary DeCarl
Bailey Diiolia
Aaruni Thakur

INTERESTED PARTIES

Keith Blanchard – Index Fresh
Jed Harrison – Harrison Ranch

CDFA

Joshua Bingham
Sarah Cardoni
Stacey Hughes
Steve Patton
Sam Santander
Marcee Yount

MEMBERS ABSENT

Salvador Dominguez

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m. by Chair Stewart Lockwood.

ITEM 2: INTRODUCTIONS/ROLL CALL

Roll was called by Sarah Cardoni, and a quorum was established.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Lockwood requested a motion to approve the September 12, 2023, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

A revision to Item 4: Bryce Bannatyne made a public comment and brought up concerns of avocados sourced from Nayarit, Mexico, being sold in the United States. Jalisco, Mexico was incorrectly listed as the location from where the avocados were being obtained.

A revision to Item 7: April Aymami presented the California Avocado Commission (CAC) Avocado Inspection Program (AIP) Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023/24. Sam Santander was incorrectly listed as the person who presented the AIP Budget for FY 2023/24.

MOTION: Chair Stewart Lockwood moved to approve the September 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes as amended. Vice Chair John Schaap seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 5: COMMITTEE VACANCY AND TERMS REPORT

Cardoni provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report. New terms will begin June 1, 2024. Handler Member, John Schaap was recommended to serve his fourth term. Aaruni Thakur was recommended to serve his third term. This will be Thakur's first term serving as a full Grower Member. Hillary DeCarl was appointed on February 1, 2024, to serve as a Handler Member. Jed Harrison was recommended to serve as a Grower Member commencing on June 1, 2024. There will be one Alternate Grower Member vacancy and one Alternate Handler Member vacancy.

ITEM 6: REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED CDFA FISCAL YEAR 2024/25 BUDGET

Santander presented the Proposed CDFA FY 2024/25 Budget. The proposed budget included \$214,049 for personal services; \$74,464 for operating expenses and equipment; a gas tax credit of \$4,980; and a pro rata cash adjustment of \$17,141, for a total budget of \$300,674.

Chair Lockwood asked for a motion to approve the CDFA Proposed Budget for FY 2024/25 as presented.

MOTION: Chair Stewart Lockwood moved to approve the Proposed CDFA FY 2024/25 Budget as presented. Vice Chair John Schaap seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 7: GEM RELEASE DATES

Vice Chair Schaap initiated the discussion on the release dates for GEM avocados, based on a study conducted by Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia of the University of California, Riverside, and presented during the September 13, 2022, AIC meeting.

Vice Chair Schaap questioned if these recommended dates aligned with the date at which the fruit reached minimum maturity standards and expressed concern about using averages from various regions in the state to select GEM avocado release dates. Harrison stated that GEM avocados in the San Joaquin Valley reached maturity earlier, compared to other regions in the state.

Santander explained that three years of research data were used to establish the recommended release date of GEM avocados, along with utilizing data from past informational testing conducted, which accumulated to almost four years of data.

Vice Chair Schaap asked CDFA for guidance regarding where to find the laws and steps required to be followed when a new avocado variety is released for commercial use. Schapp also stated that many of the committee members are unfamiliar with these laws as well as other laws that pertain to avocados and suggested that a reference document be drafted to assist with future varieties.

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 10, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., via Zoom.

John Schaap requested a reference guide on establishing new avocado varieties.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:32 p.m. by Chair Lockwood.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sam Santander, Program Supervisor
Inspection and Compliance Branch
Inspection Services