



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
CALIFORNIA CITRUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CCAC)**

**November 7, 2024 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference**

1031 South Mount Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93307

MEMBERS PRESENT

John S. Gless
Maribel Nenna
George McEwen
Lisa Tate
Randy Stucky
Gustavo Carranza
Brad Bishel
A.J. Reid

**REMOTE MEMBERS
PRESENT**

Tom Mayhew
Sonya Carrillo

MEMBERS ABSENT

David Haas Jr.

INTERESTED PARTIES

Michelle San Soucie – Kern Co.
Daniel Ramirez – Kern Co.
Tesfaye Jimma – Tulare Co.
Tom Tucker – Tulare Co.
Sofia Hernandez – Fresno Co.
Christopher Aramouni – Riverside
Co.
Rudy Valencia – Riverside Co.
Ameer Atrash – Ventura Co.
Sam Botkin – CA Citrus Growers
Association
Casey Creamer – CA Citrus
Mutual (CCM)
Michael Bliss – CCM
Jacob Villagomez – CCM
Kelly Albello – National Agriculture
Statistics Service (NASS)
Kurt Floren – Los Angeles Co.
Lauren Balthazor – Ventura Co.
Shawn Davis – Sun World
Erin Hay

CDFA

Stacey Hughes
Marcee Yount
Karrie Batchelor
Sarah Cardoni
Kristi Garcia
Julie Lee
Andrea Todd
Kevin Jenkins
Steve Patton
Anna Carrasquillo

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Karrie Batchelor.

ITEM 2: ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS

Roll was called by Kristi Garcia. A quorum was established, and introductions were made.

ITEM 3: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Batchelor opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

MOTION: Brad Bishel nominated Lisa Tate as Chair. John S. Gless seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

Batchelor opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair.

MOTION: John S. Gless nominated Sonya Carrillo as Vice Chair. Maribel Nenna seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 4: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 5: REVIEW OF MARCH 7, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Lisa Tate requested a motion to approve the March 7, 2024, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

MOTION: Tom Mayhew moved to approve the March 7, 2024, Meeting Minutes as submitted. John S. Gless seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 6: COMMITTEE VACANCY AND TERMS REPORT

Garcia provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report. There is currently one vacancy, and it is for a producer member representing mandarins. Terms will expire September 30, 2025, and members eligible for reappointment are Gustavo Carranza, Maribel Nenna, David Haas Jr., and Sonya Carrillo. Members who are not eligible for reappointment are George McEwen, Brad Bishel, and Tom Mayhew.

ITEM 7: FUND CONDITION UPDATE

Batchelor presented the Fund Condition Update. As of June 30, 2024, the Beginning Fund Balance was \$1,826,381. Projected Revenue for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25 is \$923,585 for a total of \$2,749,966 in available resources. Projected Expenditures for FY 2024/25 are \$833,374, with a Cash Adjustment of \$37,731 and a Gas Tax credit of \$14,290, for a projected Ending Balance of \$1,893,151.

ITEM 8: COUNTY ORANGE MATURITY PROGRESS REPORT

County agricultural staff provided their Orange Maturity Progress Reports.

Sofia Hernandez provided the update for Fresno County and reported the following: harvest began on October 12, 2024; two lots failed color testing and after retesting the following day 23 out of the 96 bins were disposed of; 13 sheds have started receiving fruit; and currently there are no issues with color; the majority of loads received have been local fruit; two official tests were performed and color and sugar levels continue to improve, the highest recorded test was 182.5, with an average of 130 and above on the California Standard Scale.

Tesfaye Jimma provided the update for Tulare County and reported the following: harvesting began on October 10, 2024; 22 packing houses were currently receiving fruit; no oranges have been rejected for color or maturity this season; of the 720 maturity tests conducted, 96 percent of the tests scored above 100 on the California Standard Scale.

Michelle San Soucie provided the update for Kern County and reported the following: the first courtesy color check was performed on October 2, 2024, harvest began on October 10; three noncompliance's were issued for failing A color standards – 112 bins were rejected on October 10 and eight bins were disposed of after retesting, 223 bins were rejected on October 14, and 43 bins were disposed of after retesting, 20 bins were rejected on October 18 and then transported to a packinghouse in Ventura County and disposed of, the grower chose not to recondition; 132 sugar tests have been conducted; 98.5 percent of sugar tests scored over 100; and four packing sheds are currently receiving fruit.

Ameer Atrash provided the update for Ventura County and reported the following: Ventura County received one rejected shipment from Kern County due to failing color, the grower opted out of reconditioning and the shipment was disposed of; four other loads that were tested had sugar levels above 150; there are currently no issues with color; and two packing houses are currently receiving navels.

Christopher Aramouni provided the update for Riverside County and reported the following: no navel oranges have been received yet; packing houses anticipate receiving fruit by late November or early December; and routine inspections are being conducted.

A representative from San Diego County was not present but Batchelor stated that Monica Winters had reported the county had not received any loads of fruit yet.

After a brief discussion, committee members chose December 2, 2024 as the end date for mandatory maturity testing, and allowing counties to continue with discretionary testing as needed.

MOTION: Tom Mayhew moved to end mandatory maturity testing on December 2, 2024, allowing counties discretion to test if needed and to allow Southern California counties to run a couple test on their local fruit. John S. Gless seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

Following the motion, a discussion began regarding concerns over color testing and standards. Committee members and industry members discussed how the existing color chip standard may not reflect current industry needs or account for newer varieties and changing climates.

Several committee members noted that fruit with acceptable internal maturity had been held back based on external color, causing both cost and market pressures. Others countered that color remains important for ensuring consistency and high quality. Stacey Hughes acknowledged the importance of having more consistency amongst counties and suggested increasing the focus on A color during the citrus maturity training for county inspectors prior to the season starting.

Several committee members and attendees recommended exploring technological alternatives to the color chip, such as digital devices that could remove human

subjectivity. There was no immediate plan to change color regulations, but the committee agreed on the need for more research and consistent training to align inspection practices statewide and wished to discuss the topic further. It was also discussed to continue having orange maturity educational field days for industry and suggested having the next one in Tulare County.

ITEM 9: PROGRAM UPDATES

Hughes reported that the Standardization Advisory Committee has two vacant Fresh Fruit positions representing oranges and other citrus fruit and encouraged interested industry members to apply.

Batchelor reported that a petition may be submitted by the end of the year to standardize a new experimental container. If approved, this would require regulatory change to add the container to the standard container list.

ITEM 10: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held Thursday, March 20, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and will be held in person at the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. Agenda items will include color and maturity standards.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m. by Chair Tate.

Respectfully submitted by:

Karrie Batchelor, Agriculture Program Supervisor I
Inspection and Compliance Branch
Inspection Services