



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
AVOCADO INSPECTION COMMITTEE (AIC)
September 9, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Teleconference
2399 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95833**

REMOTE MEMBERS

PRESENT

John Schaap – Chair
Hilary DeCarl
Aaruni Thakur – Vice Chair
Bailey Diiioia

INTERESTED PARTIES

April Aymami – California Avocado
Commission (CAC)
Rudy Valencia – Riverside County

CDFA

Stacey Hughes
Sam Santander
Marcee Yount
Kristi Garcia
Danny Lee

MEMBERS ABSENT

Jed Harrison

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: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Garcia opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

MOTION: Aaruni Thakur nominated John Schaap for Chair. Bailey Diiioia seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

Garcia opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair.

MOTION: John Schaap nominated Aaruni Thakur for Vice Chair. Hillary DeCarl seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF MARCH 11, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

Chair John Schaap requested a motion to approve the March 11, 2025, meeting minutes as presented.

MOTION: Vice Chair Aaruni Thakur moved to approve the March 11, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Hilary DeCarl seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 5: COMMITTEE VACANCY AND TERMS REPORT

Garcia provided the Committee Vacancy and Terms Report. Current vacancies include one Grower Member, one Grower Member Alternate, and one Handler Member Alternate. Grower Members Aaruni Thakur and Jed Harrison are eligible to serve another term, commencing on June 1, 2026.

ITEM 6: REVIEW OF THE AVOCADO INSPECTION PROGRAM BUDGET

April Aymami presented the CAC Avocado Inspection Program (AIP) Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025/26. The beginning reserves for FY 2025/26 were \$835,569; total projected revenue was \$827,500; total projected expenses were \$916,373; with ending reserves totaling \$746,696.

MOTION: Bailey Diiolia moved to approve the FY 2025/26 CAC AIP Budget as presented. Vice Chair Aaruni Thakur seconded the motion. A vote by roll call was taken. The motion passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

ITEM 7: RESEARCH CONCLUSION AND DECISION TO DETERMINE GEM RELEASE DATES

Marcee Yount led the discussion, which focused on the history, research, and decision-making process surrounding the release dates for the GEM avocado variety. Yount explained that the AIC initiated a three-year research study in 2018, led by Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia of the University of California (UC), Riverside, to determine appropriate GEM release dates. The study included data from Northern, Southern, and San Joaquin Valley regions. Dr. Arpaia recommended two distinct release dates, December 11th for San Joaquin Valley regions, and February 4th for Northern and Southern regions. During a meeting held in September 2022, the committee proposed a single release window from December 24th to March 4th, which CDFA Secretary Karen Ross ultimately rejected in favor of the scientifically supported dual-date recommendation, citing regulatory requirements to base such decisions on validated research.

Committee members expressed concerns about relying solely on dry matter as a maturity indicator. Suggestions included revisiting the dry matter threshold for GEM, considering varietal differences, and potentially implementing a marketing order like those used in Mexico and Peru to better manage quality and consumer expectations.

The committee agreed to invite Dr. Arpaia to the next meeting to address questions about Dr. Arpaia's research protocols and explore the impact of regional stress on maturity testing. They also discussed the possibility of reviewing standards for other avocado varieties and considering seasonal adjustments to release dates. Yount also offered to invite CDFA's Marketing Services Division to the next committee meeting.

ITEM 8: PROGRAM UPDATES

Sam Santander provided Program Updates. As of August 2025, the AIP certified 305,718,833 pounds of avocados, performed 6,703 size counts, issued 87 noncompliance violations, rejected 4,283 containers for repacking, performed 223 maturity tests, and issued five noncompliance violations for immature fruit, leading to the disposal of 7,225 pounds of fruit. AIP also performed 1,912 informational tests, of

which 860 were for GEM avocados. Santander noted that the dry matter results of the GEM variety tests were consistent with the release dates and the corresponding size.

ITEM 9: NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next meeting will be held on March 10, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will be a hybrid meeting, with the location to be determined at a later date. Agenda items will include a discussion with Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia regarding research protocols.

ITEM 10: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 p.m. by Chair Schaap.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sam Santander, Program Supervisor
Inspection and Compliance Branch
Inspection Services