

California Walnut Board

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CALIFORNIA WALNUT BOARD

RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES November 17, 2009

The CWB Research Committee met on Tuesday, November 17, 2009, at the California Farm Bureau Federation. Chairperson Jerry Moore called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. Ms. Steindorf called the roll and a quorum was established. The following committee members were present:

Jerry Moore, Chair	David Keyawa
Robert Driver, Vice-Chair	Pete Turner
Jerry Siebert	William Tos

Committee member Bruce Beard was absent. Others in attendance included: Production Research Advisory Council members Bill Carriere, Sam Keiper, Brent Barton, Joe Grant, Steve Welter, Janine Hasey and Dan Kluepfel. Also in attendance were David Ramos, CWB Research Director; Bruce Lampinen, Extension Pomologist UC Davis; Duane Lindsay, CWC Technical Support; and CWB staff members Dennis Balint and Dana Steindorf.

The first agenda item was the approval of the minutes from the June 3, 2009 meeting. Dr. Siebert made a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Tos seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The next agenda item was the review of the Research Committee Strategic Planning meeting held on June 3, 2009. Chairperson Moore stated that the Research Committee came together to prioritize research goals and he presented the list of goals that the committees agreed on. They included, in no particular order: improved pest and disease management; alter fatty acid composition of walnuts; smaller stature trees to reduce growing costs and improve pest control; profitably increase yield; decrease water use; earlier harvest; increase edible yield; decrease fertilizer use; and increase percentage of kernel halves. The discussions today will include ways to integrate the Research Committee's goals and PRAC priorities.

Chairperson Moore moved on to the next agenda items, Brief History of PRAC and the Match of PRAC Priorities to Research Committee Goals. Dr. Ramos gave a brief overview of the Production Research Advisory Council (PRAC) which was formed in 2005. PRAC includes four work groups that meet periodically throughout the year and present research priorities to the Research Committee: Orchard Management; Genetic Improvement; Entomology; and Plant Pathology.

Mr. Grant made his presentation on the Research Committee goals and the PRAC working group priorities and the integration of the two groups (Research Committee and PRAC). He presented a flow chart on the history of PRAC and the way the working groups of PRAC and the Research Committee communicate. The vision has always been that PRAC is advisory to the Research Committee. Mr. Grant explained that the goals the Research Committee devised at their strategic planning meeting in June describe the ideal orchard of the future; the goals are large and idealistic. PRAC took the priorities that the working groups had developed and meshed them with the Research Committee goals. Mr. Grant presented a spreadsheet he developed to outline that integration and explained that two issues came up during the creation of this spreadsheet. Each of the PRAC working group priorities has been aligned under a Research Committee goal with several PRAC priorities not fitting into any of the nine goals as developed at the strategic meeting. Mr. Grant also explained that the goal of altering the fatty acid composition of walnuts has never come up during PRAC's discussions of research priorities. Mr. Grant would like the Committee's direction on these two issues and would also like to have a discussion about where does PRAC go from here. He believes that, if the Research Committee wants to continue working with PRAC, there needs to be a more defined and formalized PRAC/Research Committee relationship.

Dr. Siebert asked Mr. Grant how the PRAC working groups determine the "high/medium/low" designations for each research issue. Mr. Carriere explained that the rankings are the opinion of the working group members based on how serious and how solvable are the problems. A discussion ensued about the process for prioritization of research issues. Mr. Tos made a suggestion that once per year the Research Committee and the PRAC working group chairs get together to review and evaluate goals and priorities. He also suggested that each Research Committee member attend and participate in one or more PRAC working group meetings during the year. Mr. Welter expanded further by suggesting that the PRAC working group chairs attend the Research Committee meetings.

Mr. Moore moved on to the next agenda item, Future Role of PRAC. Mr. Carriere stated that it sounds like the Research Committee wants to continue to work with PRAC. Mr. Balint suggested that staff send a draft of the minutes from this meeting to all attendees to make sure that we capture the decisions the Committee is making. Mr. Tos also suggested that there be a separate guideline or planning document created to detail the structure and direction of the Research Committee and PRAC and it can be reviewed annually at the integrated Research Committee/PRAC meeting.

Dr. Ramos stated that there is a need for the Research Committee to provide some limited funding for the PRAC working groups to conduct their meetings. Other issues he would like addressed are: should there be an appointment or assignment of a member of the Research Committee to each of the working groups; should there be at least one integrated annual meeting and the time frame for that meeting; how often should the working groups meet; and should membership of the PRAC be "permanent" or rotating. Mr. Barton suggested that Mr. Moore, Dr. Siebert, Mr. Balint and Dr. Ramos get together to determine the level of support. Dr. Siebert asked for more information from PRAC on the level of support needed. Mr. Carriere doesn't believe it would be much; Mr. Driver suggested around \$5,000 annually. Mr. Balint stated that the Board does not have the authority to pay per diem for attendance at the working group meetings, however, the Board can pay for lunch, room rental, etc. Chairperson Moore suggested that the dollar amount for support be discussed at the next Research Committee meeting where funding decision are made for the coming year.

The Committee agreed that the integrated committee meeting including PRAC members and working group chairs should be held in late summer or early fall before the call for proposals in late fall.

A discussion ensued about assigning one or more Research Committee members to each PRAC working group. Dr. Ramos suggested that the members express which working group they might be interested in and go from there. Chairperson Moore stated that this issue will be addressed at the next meeting.

Mr. Keiper asked if the Committee needs to adopt the goals/priorities spreadsheet as presented by Mr. Grant. Mr. Carriere suggested that the Committee address the two issues mentioned by Mr. Grant; the ALA improvement in walnuts; and the other goals that do not fit into a PRAC category. Mr. Carriere asked if some of the goals in the "other" category may fit into the Post Harvest arena. Mr. Keiper stated that several priorities could be moved to Grades & Standards Committee (post harvest). The Grades & Standards Committee has already created a Food Safety Working Group that has begun actively tackling the issue of food safety in the industry. Dr. Siebert stated that it seems the best course of action is to leave the issue of food safety in the Grades & Standards Committee and if it determines that there is any issue that may be production research related, it can be brought before this Committee. The Committee agreed to move three of the "other" goals to post harvest under the Grades & Standards Committee: postharvest pest management; food safety; and postharvest handling, biology and technology.

A discussion ensued about the Research Committee goal of altering the fatty acid composition of walnuts. Mr. Tos made a motion to remove "alter fatty acid composition" from the Research Committee's strategic planning goals. Mr. Driver seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The Committee then again reviewed the Research goals as developed at the strategic planning meeting. They discussed adding a priority in relation to environmentally responsible activities. Mr. Tos made a motion to add "Promote Environmental Stewardship" to the Research Committee goal list. Mr. Turner seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The Committee discussed whether or not the goal list is in order of priority and the consensus was that the list is not in any particular ranking order. The Committee agreed that air quality and waste management will fall under environmental stewardship. After further discussion, the Committee agreed that the main goal or statement of the Research Committee is to profitably increase yield. Chairperson Moore, Mr. Grant, Dr. Siebert and Dr. Ramos will work on refining the priority list for the Strategic Planning Retreat in December. They will submit it via email to all Research and PRAC members for their review before the list is presented to the full Board in December.

Chairperson Moore moved on to the next agenda item, Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) Program – Walnut Rootstock Proposal. Mr. Kluepfel explained that in the farm bill that was signed into law about two years ago, there was about \$50 million set aside for SCRI. We were not successful in the first round with the rootstock proposal. Mr. Kluepfel presented a copy of the proposal that was put together for the second round. Again, the project was not funded on the second round, however, the SCRI reviewers had strong comments about the quality of the proposal. Mr. Kluepfel is hoping the third proposal that will be submitted in January will be successful. SCRI mandates one to one matching; for every dollar that USDA provides, there must be a matching dollar from other sources (direct real costs or salary matches).

Dr. Ramos distributed a list of the current year projects. There are four projects that were funded as part of the SCRI project for a total of \$135,000. If we are going to again apply for the

SCRI grant in January, the Research Committee needs to approve these four projects for the matching funds.

Mr. Driver made a motion to approve the four research proposals (Clonal Propagation of Walnut Rootstock Genotypes for Genetic Improvement at \$65,500; Evaluation of Wild Juglans Species for Crown Gall Resistance at \$27,000; Biology and Management of Phytophthora Crown and Root Rot on Walnut at \$18,500; and Methyl Bromide Alternatives at \$24,000) that will be submitted to SCRI in January. These projects will be funded through the Research Committee whether or not matching funds from SCRI are received. Mr. Keyawa seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Dr. Ramos presented the next agenda item, Walnut Farm Advisor Support. He indicated that with university budget cuts the twelve walnut farm advisors in the state have very limited funds available for travel costs. The annual Walnut Research Conference in Bodega Bay is a very important meeting for the farm advisors as the information at that meeting flows from the researchers to the farm advisors who in turn take it back to the growers in their home counties. Fortunately, this year, because of Gale McGranahan's creation of a farm advisors support fund upon her retirement, there is enough support to get all the walnut farm advisors to Bodega Bay; however, in future years there will need to be continued support from the industry. A discussion ensued about how to provide support in the future and the limitations the Board has on paying expenses for non-member participation. Some members of the Committee suggested that the walnut farm advisors should build their travel expenses to Bodega Bay into their projects.

Under other business, Mr. Barton introduced the idea of a scorecard to hold the researchers and Committee accountable that they are achieving a solid return on investment. Mr. Tos stated that there was a list developed of successes and non-successes as part of the long-term strategies for the strategic planning meeting. Mr. Driver stated he likes the idea, but that it is impossible to put a value on projects such as the breeding program. Dr. Siebert stated that the Committee needs to ask one basic question before any funding of a project; what do they expect the payout to be? Dr. Ramos stated that too often it is impossible to predict what the end product will be. A discussion ensued on the feasibility of putting together a "return on investment" scorecard.

Also under other business, Mr. Duane Lindsay addressed some regulatory issues. He mentioned that the Section 18 on Manex is still on hold and we are looking at mancozeb. The Critical Use Exemption on methyl bromide was cut back again this year; we are in a sense being forced by EPA to the replacement sulfuryl fluoride which has not been proven in stored product egg kill and colder temperatures. Mr. Lindsay distributed a copy of a presentation from SecurFood Science laboratories on organic non-thermal pasteurization. We are not being forced into pasteurization; however, it is something that the industry should be aware of. A discussion ensued about regulatory issues in the industry.

The time and place of the next meeting will be at the discretion of staff and the Committee chair. Hearing no further business, Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m.