

California Walnut Board

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GRADES & STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 29, 2011

The California Walnut Board Grades & Standards Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at the California Farm Bureau Federation in Sacramento, CA. Committee Chairperson Bill Carriere called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Ms. Steindorf called the roll and established a quorum. The following Committee members were present:

Bill Carriere, Chairperson
Steve Lindsay, Vice Chairperson
Chuck Crain
Frank Guerra
Sam Keiper (non-voting)
Gus Mariani
Pete Turner

Also present were: Duane Lindsay, CWB/CWC Technical Advisor; Mike Hurley, Gail Santana and Jeremiah Szabo of DFA; Spencer Walse of USDA/ARS; and CWB staff members Dennis Balint, Carl Eidsath and Dana Steindorf.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the last Grades & Standards Committee meeting held on January 21, 2011. Mr. Guerra made motion to approve the minutes as mailed, Mr. Turner seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Chairperson Carriere moved on to the next agenda item, Phosphine Efficacy Study. Mr. Eidsath explained that we may need to have a phosphine solution if the EPA hazard condition for sulfuryl fluoride goes forward; Dr. Spencer Walse will present options that may be available to the industry. A discussion ensued about the future of sulfuryl fluoride (SF). Chairperson Carriere stated that our strategy remains that same; move forward with trying to save SF since we worked so hard to get it, until which time EPA makes their decision. If EPA decides to remove SF as an option, we will need to have a plan in place for other options.

Dr. Walse commented that there is no efficacy data on phosphine and before a transition is suggested by either MBTOC or EPA, we need to have that data. There is a USDA/FAS sponsored program called Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) which is a grant that supports commodities with a market retention or access issue. Dr. Walse suggested putting together a TASC grant proposal on phosphine efficacy data; he will help provide Board staff the necessary information to complete a TASC proposal. His study would have three main objectives: the first would be to get laboratory and pilot scale efficacy data; the second would

be to reduce the time required for fumigation by looking at mixtures and vacuum; and the third phase would be to integrate this into the applied scenario as quickly as possible.

Mr. Balint recommended that the Committee request an additional \$150,000 in funding from the Board in the event the TASC proposal is turned down or not fully funded. Mr. Lindsay made a motion to fund a phosphine efficacy study at \$150,000 (to be offset by any TASC funds received). Mr. Crain seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Eidsath presented the next agenda item, Food Safety Projects for Upcoming Harvest. He commented that the Food Safety Working Group met in January; Dr. Linda Harris attended that meeting to review her past research and how that will affect future research and to present her ideas on moving toward a commercial setting (from a lab setting) for her research.

Mr. Eidsath presented a series of projects that Dr. Harris has recommended. The first project on the list was the second annual *Salmonella* survey for the industry. Dr. Harris is recommending using a 375 or 400 gram sample for the survey and taking 1,000 samples; the survey will be very similar to last year with samples collected by DFA from handlers. The total cost for the project is \$43,419.

Mr. Eidsath stated that the next project from Dr. Harris is so new that he is not asking for approval today; he would like to first present it to the Food Safety Working Group. This new project is estimated at \$72,470 and is broken down into five objectives. Objective one is to determine the potential for transfer of microorganisms from shell surface to kernel during the cracking process. Objective two is to compare microbial loads of walnuts at time of harvest and during hulling/dehydrating. Objective three is to evaluate the impact of different sanitizers on overall micro loads by use of sanitizers within the rock tank and take-away conveyor system at huller. Objective four is to compare survival of dry and wet *Salmonella* on walnut kernels and to evaluate the growth and/or survival of *Salmonella* in dusts collected from walnut processing facilities. Objective five is to outline a framework for a quantitative microbial assessment for walnuts. A discussion ensued about the objectives and how the project may benefit the industry.

Mr. Eidsath stated that he will spend some more time reviewing the objectives of the project and discuss them with Dr. Harris. He will bring it back to the Committee at the next meeting.

Chairperson Carriere moved on to the next agenda item, PPO Pasteurization Validation Project. Mr. Hurley stated that the preliminary study they conducted a year ago showed that, using the small chambers, they were getting a 3 or 4 log kill with PPO. They recently repeated the research, and with inoculated *Salmonella* in walnuts and almonds, they are getting a 7 or 8 log kill. One reason for the greater log kill from a year earlier could be attributed to the sterilization bags used for holding the product in the first study versus the hairnets they used in the second study. Mr. Hurley said they still need more time to determine the differences and are not quite ready to publish.

Mr. Hurley also mentioned that there is a surrogate that was developed by the almond industry to do thermal testing; the surrogate is not doing well in the testing. They need to determine if the surrogate works for PPO or not. Also, the taste tests are moving forward; they are starting to see some breakdown with the higher temperatures as expected.

Chairperson Carriere asked Mr. Eidsath to comment on the next agenda item, Update on NSF Block Grant Handler Food Safety Training. Mr. Eidsath explained that NSF Davis Fresh is going to produce modules on food safety that will be available on-line to handlers and then progress into face-to-face meetings for more risk analysis and training. He just received sixteen

modules for review and comment; he will present the modules to the Food Safety Working Group for their review as well.

Under other business, Mr. Keiper distributed an informational document regarding the USDA grades and standards on size tolerances on medium/baby blend. This is an issue that has presented itself to DFA during harvest season from various handlers. In comparing the DFA inspection manual to the USDA grades and standards manual, there are some discrepancies; DFA would like to have their manual mirror the USDA inspection manual. A discussion ensued about the sizing issue and the history of how the wording in the manuals came about. The Committee will need to review this issue at their next meeting in order to take action and then bring their recommendation to the full Board in June. Mr. Keiper will put something together for the Committee to review and then staff will schedule a teleconference meeting for the Committee to take action on this item.

The time and place of the next meeting will be determined by the Chairperson and staff. There was no need for Executive Session. Hearing no further business, Chairperson Carriere adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m.