

## California Walnut Board

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## GRADES & STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**June 7, 2012**

The California Walnut Board Grades & Standards Committee held a meeting on Thursday, June 7, 2012 at the Marriott Hotel in Rancho Cordova, CA. Committee Chairperson Bill Carriere called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Ms. Dana 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, CWC Technical Consultant; Dr. Linda Harris of UC Davis; Jeff Smutny and Andrea Ricci of USDA/ARS; Tom Vogel, Jeremiah Szabo, Thomas Jones and Gail Santana of DFA; and CWB staff members Dennis Balint, Carl Eidsath and Dana Steindorf.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the Grades & Standards meeting held on March 14, 2012. Mr. Steve Lindsay made a motion to approve the minutes as mailed; Mr. Crain seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Chairperson Carriere asked Mr. Tom Vogel of DFA to present the next agenda item – Proposal to use DFA inspectors to audit volunteer huller/dehydrators prior to start of 2012 harvest. Mr. Vogel distributed an amended copy of the proposal that was presented to the Committee and approved in March. The amendments include the additional inspections at hullers that the Food Safety Working Group suggested DFA conduct on a voluntary basis. The cost for the additional work includes taking the GMP manual and developing a checklist that walnut hullers can use for self-inspection. DFA inspectors would conduct one inspection on a voluntary basis, issue a report with any non-conformities found and the report will be given a graded score. The cost for the additional work will not exceed \$50,000, anticipating that up to 100 hullers will participate. Anything above \$50,000 will be absorbed by DFA.

The Committee discussed the reports that will be given to the hullers after DFA inspects hulling facilities and whether the Committee will receive a report. Mr. Smutny commented that since the marketing order does not address hullers, there is no regulation on hullers by the

Board. Mr. Keiper stated that the Board could receive a composite report, but the individual reports will need to remain confidential in order to encourage participation by hullers.

Mr. Steve Lindsay made a motion to approve the revised proposal from DFA in the additional amount of \$50,000 with any unused funds being returned to the Board. He stipulated that DFA shall submit a progress report on the huller certification project before the end of the 2012 season (calendar year end). Mr. Guerra seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Chairperson Carriere asked Dr. Linda Harris to present the next agenda item – Findings from the 2011/2012 food safety projects. Dr. Harris presented some findings on the impact of rinses after hulling; she tested plain water, peracetic acid, and a lauric arginate spray. The samples used were collected directly from a tree and were tested inshell with the hull removed. The samples were separated into those with visibly intact shells and those with visibly cracked, broken or missing shells. Before cracking, the shells of the nuts were cleaned using an alcohol wipe to lower the risk of cross contamination during cracking.

Dr. Harris indicated that during hulling, there is a significant increase in microbial load on shells and kernels. There is a decrease on the shells during drying by about a log, and the more broken the shell, the greater the microbial load is on the kernels. During storage, the microbial load decreased on both shells and kernels that are extracted from both broken and intact shells (about a 2-log reduction over a five month period). The evaluation of the antimicrobial spray (peracetic and lauric arginate) indicated that under the conditions, concentration of spray and exposure times they evaluated, there was no reduction of microbial load on walnuts - not on shells, kernels, or during storage. Dr. Harris stated that she does not necessarily believe that this means there is no advantage to using such sprays; there may be other advantages such as keeping microbial loads down in the facility, maintaining sanitation on equipment, etc. Dr. Harris explained the next steps for the study, include testing different concentrations and types of per acetic acid, evaluating transfer from the shell to the kernel during commercial cracking and working on building a risk assessment model.

Chairperson Carriere moved on to the next agenda item, proposal by Dr. Harris for 2012/13 food safety projects. Dr. Harris stated that the proposed study is a follow-up to the one just reported on that will track the routes of contamination of walnut kernels; the study will use two walnut varieties and more samples and will include a risk assessment. Dr. Harris does not have a formal proposal to present to the Committee at this time, however, the budget is estimated to be \$65,000 for 2012/13.

Mr. Turner made a motion to approve Dr. Harris' proposed study at \$65,000. Mr. Lindsay seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Chairperson Carriere asked Mr. Steve Lindsay to present the next agenda item, update on recent changes to status of surrogate *Enterococcus faecium* and impact to walnuts. Mr. Lindsay stated that the Almond Board funded a project back in 2007 to find suitable surrogates for Salmonella PT 30 in their validation work for thermal processes. They identified *Enterococcus faecium* for that validation work; processes approved included dry heat processes, moist air processes, steam plastizing, ambient steam processes and other heating methods. The surrogate has played a significant role in validation of many different technologies for not only almonds, but other tree nuts such as pecans and walnut PPO trials.

Mr. Lindsay explained that pathogenic organisms are classified into four bio-security levels based on risk with level one being non-pathogenic. *E. faecium* was recently re-classified by USDA to level 2, the same as *Salmonella* and *Listeria*. The issue becomes one of safety in the processing plants; what is the risk of using *Enterococcus faecium* for validation trials? The Almond Board is working with Dr. Marco at UC Davis to publish her surrogate work that

indicates *E. faecium* is safe for validation testing and communicate such to USDA. The Almond Board is also currently to identify other appropriate surrogates.

Dr. Harris commented that she believes USDA changed the designation because the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) did so. Several things have happened in the past couple of weeks, including discussions with FDA by herself and the pistachio industry. The FDA has no plans to do anything negative to somebody who is using *E. faecium* as a surrogate; they have seen no evidence to suggest it is a pathogen and they have not seen any evidence that it is not a pathogen. Dr. Harris stated that the ATCC is fully aware of the situation and they have scientists working on it right now to see if they might re-classify to level 1. Dr. Harris stated that Dr. Marcos has a lot of supporting evidence to suggest that the organism has no characteristics to support that it is a pathogen. She believes there will be a resolution in a couple of months.

Mr. Lindsay is bringing this to the Grades & Standards Committee to be prepared to help provide additional financial support to identify an alternative surrogate in the event the FDA supports the USDA in the level 2 assignment to *E. faecium*.

Chairperson Carriere asked Mr. Lindsay to present the next agenda item, proposal to provide PPO residue testing funds to prepare for MRL placement in Codex and EU countries. Mr. Lindsay stated that Canada recently approved the use of PPO and the Almond Board is trying to get Codex recommendation for PPO which is a first step for acceptance in the European market. The ABC has asked for our support in generating some walnut data to include with the almond data to be submitted to Codex. They have asked for our assistance in identifying four or five handlers/processors that have PPO chambers available and can provide product for application.

Mr. Duane Lindsay stated that we are looking at a case or two of walnuts for each operation. He stated that Spencer Walse's data and USDA's data will be used as well. Three handlers with chambers have volunteered; he is looking for a smaller chamber too. Mr. Steve Lindsay stated that Diamond has two smaller chambers that may be used.

Mr. Steve Lindsay stated that we are looking at 10 different samples for each handler and hope to have the tests conducted by the end of July. Chairperson Carriere asked if Mr. Lindsay is requested funds from the Committee for this testing. Mr. Duane Lindsay stated that DFA would need funding, as well as the cost of the product, and the laboratory time.

Mr. Tom Jones stated that the last estimate he saw from Dr. Walse for the whole project was \$30,000 for almonds and walnuts. Mr. Duane Lindsay stated that he would get more information from Dr. Walse. Chairperson Carriere asked Mr. Balint about the possibility of using unused funds from 2011/12. Mr. Balint stated that if there are unused funds in the budget, it would be appropriate to use them. The Committee elected to wait for a reconciliation of the 2011/12 budget to see if there are funds left for the project.

Chairperson Carriere moved to the next agenda item, PPO pasteurization update. Mr. Eidsath stated that he just received word this morning from Jenny Scott at FDA that they have given official approval for a protocol for pasteurization of walnuts. Mr. Eidsath thanked many of the people in the room for their work on this project.

Chairperson Carriere asked Mr. Eidsath to present the next agenda item, funding of 2012/2013 food safety projects. Mr. Eidsath explained that there are three continuing projects that require funding from this Committee. He proposed the following: one more year of the Salmonella/E. Coli prevalence study at \$75,000; the annual pesticide survey conducted by DFA at \$40,000; and the MRL tracking database for exports at \$10,500.

Chairperson Carriere asked that the minutes of this meeting have a summary sheet of the projects approved and the funds allocated.

Mr. Guerra made a motion to approve the three food safety projects as presented by Mr. Eidsath - prevalence study for \$75,000, pesticide survey for \$40,000 and the MRL tracking for \$10,500. Mr. Lindsay seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The time and place of the next meeting will be at the discretion of the chairperson. There was no need for an Executive Session. Hearing no further business, Chairperson Carriere adjourned the meeting at 9:38 a.m.

## Projects Approved During 6/7/2012 Grades & Standard Meeting

<u>Project</u>	<u>Contractor/Contact</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Fiscal Year Budget</u>
Voluntary huller inspections	DFA	\$50,000.00 *	2012/13
Food safety project	UCD-Harris	\$65,000.00	2012/13
Salmonella/Ecoli study	DFA	\$75,000.00	2012/13
Pesticide survey	DFA	\$40,000.00	2012/13
MRL tracking database	Bryant Christie	\$10,500.00	2012/13
	TOTAL APPROVED	\$240,500.00	

\* \$50,000 is maximum allowed for project. Less may be spent depending on huller participation.

