

**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION  
PRODUCTION RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**February 8, 2024**

A meeting of the Production Research Committee (PRC) of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) was held on Thursday, February 8, 2024, with the following people participating:

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING:**

Leo McGuire, Chair  
John Burr  
Jason Cole (10:30)  
Consuelo Fernandez  
Darren Haver  
Danny Klittich  
Daryn Miller  
Ryan Rochefort

**CAC STAFF PARTICIPATING:**

April Aymami  
Ken Melban

**OFFICIALLY PARTICIPATING:**

Dr. Tim Spann, Spann Ag Research &  
Consulting  
Jesse Landesman, UC Santa Barbara

**GUESTS PARTICIPATING:**

John Berns  
Cameron Casey  
Giovanni

**CALL TO ORDER**

Leo McGuire, Production Research Committee (PRC) Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with a quorum present.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2023 PRODUCTION RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MOTION**

*To approve the minutes of the September 28, 2023 Production Research Committee meeting.*

*(Rochefort/Haver) MSC Unanimous*

*Motion 24-2-8-1*

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Consider request for funding from UC Santa Barbara for salinity research**

Dr. Spann explained that in late December 2023, CAC was contacted by Jesse Landesman, a graduate student beginning her PhD program at UC Santa Barbara. Ms. Landesman received a BS degree from UC Davis in Soils and Biogeochemistry. She is interested in understanding salinity and its effects on crops and in her literature review, discovered that avocados are a very salt sensitive crop. Dr. Spann told the Committee that he had several email exchanges with Ms. Landesman and a zoom meeting with her in January 2024, to discuss her interest in avocado salinity research. Dr. Spann then introduced Ms. Landesman to the Committee.

Ms. Landesman introduced herself to the Committee and explained her background and interest in understanding salinity in soils. She explained to the PRC that she is applying for a Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) grant to support her research. FFAR requires grant applicants to have an industry sponsor to ensure the research will be useful for the industry. Given her background in soils, interest in salinity, and knowing that avocados are extremely salt sensitive she reached out to see if CAC would be interested in being her industry sponsor.

She explained that as an industry sponsor there is both a financial obligation and a mentoring obligation. The financial commitment is \$32,500 per year for 3-years (\$97,500 total). The mentoring obligation requires the sponsor to commit to having one or more industry representatives to “serve as a mentor to the student, working with the student on their annual professional development plan and being available for student questions.”

Ms. Landesman explained that at this time she does not have a formal research proposal for the PRC to review, but discussed her concepts about understanding how salinity impacts soil biology and how that may harm avocado trees in addition to any direct toxicity effects of salinity. She also discussed her interest in trying to understand how the detrimental effects of salinity on soil biology may be overcome, such as through cover crops, soil additives or other methods.

The committee had a robust discussion and had considerable feedback for Jesse, such as the lack of interest in cover cropping due to issues such as water competition. The committee also brought up the idea of studying different rootstocks and understanding how soil biology changes may affect the different rootstocks and lead to difference in apparent salinity tolerance.

Concerns about committing to support Ms. Landesman without first reviewing a formal proposal were raised and discussed. Dr. Spann reiterated to the Committee the requirement of the FFAR program for industry involvement is in place specifically to ensure the funded research is developed based on industry needs and input. Overall, the idea of being able to be intimately involved in developing the research hypotheses

and helping guide Ms. Landesman's research to ensure its value to the industry was appealing to the committee.

**MOTION**

***To recommend CAC write a letter of support agreeing to serve as Jesse's industry sponsor if she is awarded an FFAR grant.***

***(Klittich/Burr) MSC – Vote Tally: Yea 5, Nay 1***

***Motion 24-2-8-2***

**ADJOURN MEETING**

Leo McGuire, Production Research Committee (PRC) Chairman, adjourned the meeting at 11:04 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Timothy Spann

**EXHIBITS ATTACHED TO THE PERMANENT COPY OF THESE MINUTES**

EXHIBIT A February 8, 2024 Production Research Committee AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary



**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION**  
**Production Research Committee**  
**AB 2720 Roll Call Vote Tally Summary**

*To be attached to the Meeting Minutes*

<b>Meeting Name:</b> <i>California Avocado Commission          Production Research Committee          Meeting</i>	<b>Meeting Location:</b> <i>Hybrid          In-person – South Coast Research          and Extension Center, Irvine          Online – Zoom</i>	<b>Meeting Date:</b> <i>February 8, 2024</i>
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<b>Attendees Who Voted</b>	<b><u>MOTION</u> 24-2-8-1</b>	<b><u>Motion</u> 24-2-8-2</b>
Leo McGuire, Chair	<i>Did not vote</i>	<i>Did not vote</i>
John Burr	Yea	Yea
Jason Cole	Absent	Yea
Darren Haver	Yea	Yea
Consuelo Fernandez	Yea	Yea
Danny Klittich	Yea	Yea
Daryn Miller	Yea	Absent
Ryan Rochefort	Yea	Nay
<b><i>Outcome</i></b>	<b><i>Unanimous</i></b>	<b><i>5 Yea, 1 Nay</i></b>