

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

March 14, 2024

A meeting of the Production Research Committee (PRC) of the California Avocado Commission (CAC) was held on Thursday, March 14, 2024, with the following people participating:

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING:

Danny Klittich, Chair
John Burr
Allisen Carmichael
Consuelo Fernandez
Darren Haver
Leo McGuire (9:48)
Daryn Miller
Ryan Rochefort
Jason Cole, *ex officio*

CAC STAFF PARTICIPATING:

April Aymami
Ken Melban

OFFICIALLY PARTICIPATING:

Dr. Tim Spann, Spann Ag Research & Consulting

GUESTS PARTICIPATING:

John Berns
Rachael Laenen

CALL TO ORDER

Danny Klittich, Production Research Committee (PRC) Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. with a quorum present.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2024 PRODUCTION RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

MOTION

To approve the minutes of the February 8, 2024 Production Research Committee meeting.

(Miller/Haver) MSC Unanimous

Motion 24-3-14-1

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Danny Klittich opened the discussion by welcoming all the members to the Production Research Committee. He asked each member to take a moment to introduce themselves and briefly describe their role in the California avocado industry. Following introductions, discussion began on the agenda items.

A. Review Committee goals and directives from CAC Bylaws

Jason Cole, CAC Chairman, began by reading Article IV, section 4 of the CAC Bylaws, which establishes the PRC as a standing committee of CAC. Danny Klittich emphasized the role of the Committee is to prioritize research needs, specifically that research which would be most impactful to the majority of industry members. Dr. Spann reminded the Committee that the Committee has no authority to allocate funds, but makes funding recommendations to the Board.

B. 2023-24 Production research budget and currently funded projects

Dr. Spann shared the 2023-24 production research budget with the Committee explaining that the total budget for the fiscal year is \$233,943. He explained that if UC Santa Barbara student Jesse Landesman is awarded an FFAR fellowship grant there would be an estimated \$8,125 increase in the 2023-24 budget. He went on to explain that the production research budget has historically been broken into three categories: pest and disease management; breeding, varieties and genetics; and cultural management. Dr. Spann then reviewed each of the currently funded projects, explaining the genesis of the projects, where they are in their funding cycle, and brief findings of the projects if applicable.

Discussion ensued and the addition of a column for total spent on each project was mentioned as being worth seeing on the production research budget sheet, especially for long-term projects such as rootstock breeding. Dr. Spann explained that he has that information, but it was left off of the budget sheet presented at the meeting and he agreed to share that with the Committee members following the meeting.

The Committee then took time to review and discuss each of the currently funded projects. The avocado lace bug project with Dr. Mark Hoddle was stressed as a critical project since that pest is being a significant issue in groves in the southern growing regions. It was agreed that coordinating a field day with Dr. Hoddle later in the year would be worthwhile.

The rootstock trials for phytophthora root rot tolerant rootstocks were discussed at length. Questions were raised about the need to continue funding those trial beyond their current funding cycle which will take the trials through their sixth year. There was general consensus that it is impossible to ever collect sufficient data to allay all fears of using these new rootstocks and at some point growers will just need to start trialing them for themselves under their growing conditions.

Lastly, the project funded with Dr. Ali Montazar to develop new crop coefficients for using in calculating avocado irrigation needs was discussed. It was agreed that this is very important project and it would be valuable to begin sharing Dr. Montazar's early results with the industry since proper irrigation is such a critical component to managing avocados. A field day with Dr. Montazar at Pine Tree Ranch along with a follow up article in From the Grove was agreed to.

C. Pine Tree Ranch Update

Dr. Spann began the discussion by informing the Committee that the variable frequency drive for the well at Pine Tree Ranch has finally been installed and is operational as of early March. He went on to explain that CAC had executed two 3-month lease extensions on the property while the work on the well was being completed, but the last lease extension had expired at the end of 2023. The Cal Poly Pomona Foundation had finally gotten a third 3-month lease extension to CAC for January – March 2024, as well as the new 5-year lease renewal for the period of April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2029. Both documents are in the process of being fully executed.

Dr. Spann then reviewed the current plantings and projects on going at Pine Tree Ranch. He explained there is a 3-year old GEM spacing trial that Dr. Ben Faber is leading. The trial should have its first harvest in 2024. Also, the company Research for Hire from Porterville is using some trees at the property for conducting pesticide residue trials. In 2023, they used 12 trees was a trial with the plant growth regulator DPP and in 2024 they will be using the same trees for a trial with Nexstar SC miticide.

In addition to these formal trees, Dr. Spann explained that all of the other plantings still exist and harvest data are being collected annually. These include tree planted on flat ground vs. berms, a spacing trial with nine different spacings, as well as the rootstock block that contains trees on 30 different rootstocks.

D. Research Priorities

Danny Klittich began the discussion by stating that it would be good for all of the Committee members work on developing a list of research needs that could then be prioritized by the Committee and used to solicit research proposals. Dr. Spann suggested that if research needs could be formulated as specific questions that the industry needs answered rather than just general topics that would be helpful to focus research requests. The Committee agreed that Dr. Spann would circulate a Google document for everyone to contribute to. A deadline of April 1 was proposed as this would allow time for the group to reconvene to prioritize the list and then solicit proposals for review in July so a preliminary budget could be presented to the Board in August.

E. 2024-25 projected budget

Jason Cole explained that his opinion as a Board member is that there is money available for research if there are projects the Committee feels strongly about. Ken Melban, CAC VP of Industry Affairs and Operations echoed this sentiment and explained how CAC's philosophy had evolved from having a fixed budget that we look for projects to spend the funds on to finding needed projects and allocating funds to them on a project-by-project basis. There was general agreement that a total research spend of \$300,000 to \$350,000 in 2024-25 would not be out of the question if necessary projects existed.

F. CAC grower outreach and education

Danny Klittich explained that this discussion item was focused primarily on CAC field days and From the Grove Magazine articles. It was agreed that the research priorities list would be helpful in developing a list of topics for grower outreach and education efforts. A question was asked about how past magazine articles, research reports and other information is organized on the CAC website. It was explained that there are three main archives on the CAC website: Research Library articles, which contains reports from CAC funded projects; Cultural Management articles, which contains articles specifically written for the website on various topics; and From the Grove magazine articles. Currently, From the Grove articles are not included in the Cultural Management archives, but it was agreed that they should be. Dr. Spann agreed to develop a list of past magazine articles along with their topic category so the articles could be moved into the Cultural Management archive.

ADJOURN MEETING

Danny Klittich, Production Research Committee (PRC) Chairman, adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Spann

EXHIBITS ATTACHED TO THE PERMANENT COPY OF THESE MINUTES

EXHIBIT A March 14, 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

Meeting Name: <i>California Avocado Commission Production Research Committee Meeting</i>	Meeting Location: <i>Hybrid In-person – Ventura County Cooperative Extension Office, Ventura Online – Zoom</i>	Meeting Date: <i>March 14, 2024</i>
--	--	---

Attendees Who Voted	<u>MOTION</u> <u>24-3-14-1</u>
Danny Klittich, Chair	<i>Did not vote</i>
John Burr	Yea
Allisen Carmichael	Yea
Consuelo Fernandez	Yea
Darren Haver	Yea
Leo McGuire	absent
Daryn Miller	Yea
Ryan Rochefort	Yea
<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Unanimous</i>