



Research, Education, and Economics (REE)
National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory
Board

Specialty Crop Committee (SCC) Meeting Notes – Thursday, July 13, 2023

SCC Members Present: Gregory Goins (Chair), Donnell Brown, Carlos Iglesias, Jim Tuinier -
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SCC Members Absent: Marguerite Green – 1

Guests: Drs. William Singer, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) and Paul Zankowski, Senior Advisor, Plant Health & Production and Plant Products (OCS)

NAREEE Board Staff Present: Kate Lewis, NAREEE Board Executive Director/Designated Federal Officer (DFO) and Michele Simmons, Program Support Specialist

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of April 2023 meeting minutes

DFO Lewis welcomed the group and attendance was taken. A quorum was established amongst the SCC Members. The June meeting minutes were approved by consensus. The June minutes and agenda will be posted to the NAREEE Advisory Board Webpage.

DFO Lewis gave an update on the FY23 nomination package. The package that includes the SCC candidate slate is with the Secretary's office. We stopped taking SCC applications for FY24 at the end of May. The candidates are being reviewed by the OCS Director and then will go to the Research Education and Economics' Under Secretary before going to the Secretary for his selections. DFO Lewis thanked Dr. Iglesias and Mr. Tuinier for reapplying for the FY24 vacancies. DFO Lewis will keep you informed with any updates. DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions. There were none.

II. Statement from Chair:

Dr. Goins thanked Drs. Singer and Zankowski for joining the meeting to give an overview of the Hemp Roadmap. He mentioned the due dates for the SCC feedback on FY24's Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) that's due to NIFA by 9/30/23 and the SCC feedback on the Hemp Research Needs Roadmap that's due to the OCS by August 10, 2023. He was interested about hearing the discussion on hemp.

Ms. Brown asked if Dr. Singer could explain his role as an AAAS Fellow.

Dr. Singer stated that he works in plant breeding and genetics with legumes, livestock feed applications, and breeding in soybeans. He works to support a lot of policies and topics that OCS covers predominately the Hemp Roadmap and Science Integrity. His main interest is in plants.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions for Drs. Singer and Zankowski.

Ms. Brown had a question for Dr. Zankowski. What's the difference between hemp and marijuana?

Dr. Zankowski – Hemp has gone through a cycle as it was legalized under the Farm Bill in 2018. Cannabidiol (CBD) broke out as one of the big uses as hemp initially. There are questions of the legality of it. The Food and Drug Administration still hasn't stated that CBD is considered safe. It can be found in foods, lotions, dog food, water, etc. During World War I and II, hemp came to the forefront of agriculture with the government encouraging farmers to grow hemp. People didn't want to think about hemp until around 2018 because it was illegal to even think about it. Because a lot of time passed, a lot of knowledge was lost from the past on hemp genetics, how to grow it, and how to process it. This is part of the reason we are writing the Hemp Roadmap to get back some of the knowledge. To find out what is important and what research needs area needs to be looked into more deeply.

Ms. Brown – So hemp isn't marijuana?

Dr. Zankowski stated the THC level makes the difference between hemp and marijuana. Anything over .3% is marijuana. Anything under .3% is hemp. The issue is growing it for CBD productions. Often when farmers grow it, they're trying to get the highest level of CBD as possible. Then the THC levels comes up high.

Dr. Iglesias – When I look at the of the process to make hemp something useful compared to cotton, hemp has to go through a retting process. What is being done right now.

Dr. Zankowski - Right now for hemp fiber, we're still learning the process. What does it really take to make hemp an acceptable commodity today in the United States. Most of the hemp fiber is coming from Canada and China.

Dr. Goins – Will you go through the Hemp Roadmap with the highlights?

Dr. Singer - The purpose of the Roadmap is for research needs. He assisted with planning the Hemp Workshop. What was gained from the workshop is what's needed from the research and the developmental side to bolster the hemp industry as a whole. What can be done to facilitate the development of the 6 following topics which are:

1. Plant Breeding and Genetics
2. Sustainable Agricultural Systems
3. Harvest Materials and Processing
4. Product Manufacturing and Supply Chain
5. Economics and Markets
6. Testing and Compliance

One challenge we faced at the workshop was staying within the boundaries of research. We tried to outline what else needs to happen to help make sure the research being done is translated into results. Many talked about encouraging positive development for the industry as a whole to enhance relationships, streamline those endeavors, and pull resources when it can benefit the industry as a whole. Dr. Singer asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Goins thanked Dr. Singer for sharing the Hemp videos and his overview of the Hemp Roadmap. He asked DFO Lewis if the Committee should approve the Hemp Roadmap now? DFO Lewis suggested the Members gather their comments as remarks on the Roadmap through track changes and submit a clean one-page document. Dr. Goins stated they will not wordsmith the Hemp Roadmap but will only make notes on the side of the Roadmap through track changes.

III. Discussion about SCC's recommendations

DFO Lewis provided the charge for the Members to have a further discussion with Drs. Singer and Zankowski about the Hemp Roadmap, if needed. The hemp feedback is informal and not a statutory requirement for the SCC Committee. It's a chance for the Committee to provide feedback to the OCS once the Roadmap moves forward.

Dr. Iglesias asked if we provide feedback for the Hemp Roadmap do we have to take on other requests for other topics? We cannot be discriminatory and provide feedback for hemp and not touch on other topics. DFO Lewis stated to mention in the comments on the Hemp Roadmap document that this Committee reviewed this research needs strategy and are open to reviewing other crops strategies.

DFO Lewis thanked Drs. Singer and Zankowski for their overview and information on the Hemp Roadmap. This Committee will take another look and develop a 1 pager listing their top recommendations. The 1 pager of recommendations will need to be approved by the Board before we submit it back to OCS.

DFO Lewis recommended that the Members provide SCRI's feedback on how it should run in FY24 based on their recommendations they provided in FY23 and the information they received from the Grant Managers meeting held in March. The Board needs to approve the feedback by the end of FY24.

Dr. Goins asked if the Committee needs to wait for the new SCC Members to move forward with the SCRI feedback.

DFO Lewis stated the current Committee can move forward without waiting for the new Committee Members to come onboard. She will provide a timeline of due dates for the Hemp Roadmap and SCRI's feedback. DFO Lewis asked Drs. Singer and Zankowski if they had any final thoughts that would help the Committee review the Roadmap.

Dr. Zankowski – Any comments will help. We want to have as many eyes as possible to review the Roadmap to make sure we're headed in the right direction or if there any gaps that need to be filled.

Dr. Singer - We want to make this a useful document. A document that can translate into utilities to help people down the road.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any more comments or questions. There were none.

IV. Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m. EDT.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 10, 2023, 2pm EDT.