



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

Specialty Crop Committee (SCC) Meeting Notes – Thursday, September 14, 2023

SCC Members Present: Dr. Gregory Goins (Chair), Ms. Donnell Brown, Dr. Carlos Iglesias - 3

SCC Members Absent: Dr. Marguerite Green and Mr. Jim Tuinier – 2

Guest Present: Dr. Kenrett Jefferson-Moore, Chair, NAREEE Advisory Board

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 August 2023 meeting minutes

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

DFO Lewis gave an update on the FY23 and FY24 nomination packages. The packages that include the SCC's candidate slates are with the Secretary's office. DFO Lewis noted there will be three SCC vacancies at the end of September 2023. Dr. Iglesias and Mr. Tuinier have reapplied for the FY24 vacancies. As soon as the new Committee Members are on board, Ms. Simmons and I will begin to onboard these new members, let them know what their charge is, and how the SCC works with the NAREEE Advisory Board. DFO Lewis will keep you informed with any updates.

Dr. Goins inquired about his position as the Chair of the SCC. He has enjoyed being the Chair for 2 years and suggested it would be a good time to vote on a new Chair.

DFO Lewis - Once the new Committee Members are onboard, there will be a vote for a new Chair and Vice-chair for the NAREEE Advisory Board, a Chair for the Committees, and Subcommittees. Typically, the Chair serves for one fiscal year. She thanked Dr. Goins for his leadership and commitment.

DFO Lewis noted that Dr. Jefferson-Moore joined the meeting. She asked her if she had any questions or items that she wanted to discuss.

Dr. Jefferson-Moore joined the call to listen in on the discussion. She is also interested in hearing about the work products of the Hemp Research Roadmap and the Committee's suggestions for the FY24 Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions before moving to the next topic. There were none.

II. Statement from Chair:

Dr. Goins thanked his SCC colleagues and the NAREEE office staff for their teamwork and the productivity it took to work on several work products in a short time period.

III. Old Business/Review

- **SCC feedback on Hemp Research Needs Roadmap**
The SCC's feedback was voted on and approved by the Executive Committee (EXECOM) and the NAREEE Advisory Board. The feedback was sent to Drs. Paul Zankowski and Will Singer. The SCC's feedback will be added to the NAREEE Advisory Board's website under the "Reports and Recommendations" tab. Dr. Goins thanked the team for their inputs. He also thanked Ms. Brown for finalizing the letter of recommendations for the Hemp Research Roadmap.
- **SCC feedback on FY24 SCRI**
DFO Lewis explained the process of the SCC's FY24 SCRI's feedback from start to finish. Once their recommendations were submitted, they were sent to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) SCRI team informally for their response to the SCC's recommendations. The OCS Director sent a letter to the SCC acknowledging receipt of their recommendations on the SCRI. Once the responses are received, they were sent to the SCC. A memo was created with the SCC's recommendations and NIFA's responses that will be sent to the REE Under Secretary for clearance and then to Secretary Vilsack. Hopefully, an acknowledgment of the SCC's FY24 SCRI's recommendations will be received from Secretary Vilsack soon.

DFO asked if there were any questions. There were none.

New Business

- **Brighter Bites Model (brighterbites.org)**
Dr. Iglesias gave an overview on Brighter Bites. This program is a nonprofit that delivers fruit and vegetable to people that cannot afford, or it is not easy for them to access. They work through the school systems, through volunteers, and donations. This is a great opportunity for not only improving the nutrition of people and making it more affordable for them to eat better, but also for reducing waste. As of today, they only operate in 11 cities. Dr. Iglesias stated folks interested in starting an enterprise like this can contact Brighter Bites directly and they will help you get started.

DFO Lewis thanked Dr. Iglesias for his brief overview of Brighter Bites. She also thanked him for bringing different topics to the SCC for discussion, such as the pesticide program and the FRESH program.

DFO Lewis asked if anyone had any questions or comments for Dr. Iglesias. There were

none.

- **California Specialty Crop Council Tour – Aug 2023**

Ms. Brown showed some pictures she captured while on the California Specialty Crop Council Tour. The tour was three and a half days which covered visiting a lot of farms and was very fast moving. It's a tour that's conducted for mostly regulators and program administrators so they can see the impact of their programs on specialty crop agriculture. Some of the folks on the tour from The Department of Agriculture included the Agricultural Research Service, the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Economic Research Service, and the Office of Technology Transfer. She discussed riding on a carrot harvester machine, visiting a nectarine packing plant, pears, cantaloupes right out of the field, garlic, and an onion packing plant. Ms. Brown mentioned that Gary Van Sickle, Executive Director, of the CA Specialty Crop Council helps to organize tours which lead into the next agenda item regarding the next in-person tour for the SCC.

- **In-person Meeting**

The Committee discussed combining a one day in-person SCC Meeting next June along with attending the California Specialty Crop Council Tour June 2024. The tour fee is \$950. A discussion to possibly attend a portion of the tour was mentioned to reduce the fee. Ms. Brown thought it was her impression that Mr. Van Sickle was inviting the SCC to be a part of other groups on the tour. There were questions whether the SCC can attend certain portions of the tour or if they have to attend the entire tour. DFO Lewis stated that she will meet with Mr. Van Sickle at the end of this week to get more details of the SCC's participation for the tour. She will brief the Committee after her meeting with Mr. Van Sickle.

IV. Wrap-up/Adjourn

DFO Lewis mentioned to the Committee that we may have to postpone the October Meeting if we don't have a Congressionally approved Farm Bill in place by the end of September. She will know more at the beginning of October and will provide an update.

Dr. Goins thanked Dr Jefferson-Moore for staying on the call for the entire meeting. He also thanked her for her great leadership of the NAREEE Advisory Board.

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

The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m. EDT.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 12, 2023, 2pm EDT.