



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

**Specialty Crop Committee (SCC) Meeting Notes – Thursday, February 8, 2024**

**SCC Members Present:** Dr. Gregory Goins (Chair), Ms. Donnell Brown, Mr. Jack Karlin, Dr. Charlie Messina, and Mr. Jim Tuinier - 5

**SCC Members Absent:** Dr. Carlos Iglesias - 1

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

**I. Welcome, Roll Call,**

DFO Lewis welcomed the group and attendance was taken. A quorum was established amongst the SCC Members.

**II. Statement from Chair:**

Dr. Goins welcomed the Members. He had no remarks this month.

**III. Old Business/Review**

Welcoming new FY23 applicant class of members- DFO Lewis asked Mr. Jack Karlin and Dr. Carlos (Charlie) Messina to provide a brief background of themselves and had the SCC members introduce themselves as well.

Welcoming new FY24 Board members - DFO Lewis indicated that updates on these nominees should happen soon. She indicated that the SCC will re-elect a new chairperson when all new members have been onboarded.

DFO Lewis gave a brief update on the SCC's work products.

**SCC Feedback Letter** on FY24 Specialty Crop Research Initiative: The Board approved the feedback letter August 2023. The OSEC briefer was developed and cleared REE September 2023. The Office of the Secretary's response letter was sent to the SCC October 2023.

**FY23 Feedback on Hemp Research Needs Roadmap** - Board approved March 2023. The Office of the Chief Scientist's (OCS) briefer was developed and submitted August 2023. OCS's responses were sent back to the SCC September 2023. The public release

of the Hemp Research Roadmap will occur on Friday, March 8, 2024, as a part of National Biobased Products Day. More information will be shared about this in the SCC March meeting.

Ms. Brown commented about an observation related to the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI). She was informed from a colleague that they were changing the rules for the relevance review feedback on projects under the SCRI program. The goal was to bring more projects that are in line with the scientific merit review. The dates for the project reviews have changed and are being moved up. The reviews are now being reviewed in February instead of March. Ms. Brown stated she wasn't aware of these changes. She suggested that Tom Bewick, Jessica Shade, and Megan O'Reilly, SCRI team for the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), attend the next SCC meeting to brief the Committee about the changes in the review process. All agreed. DFO Lewis will reach out to the NIFA team about attending March's SCC meeting.

Ms. Brown mentioned that there are two slots of money in the Farm Bill (FB) for research that are separate but are related to specialty crops. One is Block Grants and the other one is horticulture. The research and extension title of the FB bill is less than 0.2% of the entire FB. Commodity crops receive more funds than specialty crops. Nutrition and Snap benefits funding is 76% which is nearly more than three quarters of the FB. She said that some people call the FB the eater Bill because it's related to nutrition and food needs.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions for Ms. Brown. There were none.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **In-person Meeting**

The SCC previously discussed having their in-person meeting in California during the California Specialty Crop Council Tour August 2024 at their September 2023 meeting. DFO Lewis gave an update about the opportunity for the SCC to meet in person. The continuing resolution is still in effect and will expire March 8, 2024. She will be in a better position to inform the Committee whether we can move forward in planning the in-meeting once there's an update on the Federal budget for FY24. We hope to have an update on the budget at the March SCC meeting.

#### **V. Wrap-up/Adjourn**

DFO Lewis asked if there were any more comments or questions. There were none. The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m. ET.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 14, 2pm ET.