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

**Executive Committee (EXECOM) Conference Call – January 14, 2025, Minutes**

**NAREEE Committee Members Present:** Dr. Kenrett Jefferson-Moore (Chair),  
Dr. Mario Ferruzzi, Dr. Jane Kolodinsky, Dr. William Lytle - 4

**Members Absent:** – Dr. V.M. “Bala” Balasubramaniam, Ms. Donnell Brown, and Ms.  
Vanessa Garcia Polanco - 3

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

**I. Welcome from Kate Lewis, Roll Call, and Quorum Check. Quorum was met.**

DFO Lewis welcomed the group back, took roll call, and noted that the quorum was met. She informed the group that the Board, its committees and subcommittees have the authority and the legislative backing to remain active until the end of September 2025. The continuing resolution is valid until mid-March. DFO Lewis will keep the Board informed about the budget as updates become available.

Ms. Simmons asked if there were any revisions to the October minutes. There were no comments or revisions. She asked for a motion to approve the minutes. All were in favor. Ms. Simmons will have the web team post the October minutes and agenda on the NAREEE website.

**II. Report/Remarks from the Chair Dr. Jefferson-Moore, Chair**

Dr. Jefferson-Moore welcomed the group back after 2 months of absence. She stated that this is her last few months with the NAREEE Advisory Board. Dr. Jefferson-Moore mentioned that has enjoyed the experience and all that the group has accomplished. She understands the complexities of the Farm Bill and the uncertainty of the FY25 budget but would like to have a NAREEE Board in-person meeting and an opportunity to meet the Secretary of USDA before her term ends. She thanked Dr. Ferruzzi for his leadership in working with the Ad-hoc group on the relevancy and adequacy report on precision nutrition. Dr. Jefferson-Moore also thanked Dr. Jim McFerson for his leadership on the Crop Vulnerability report.



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DFO Lewis thanked Dr. Jefferson-Moore for her time and dedication for chairing the NAREEE Advisory Board.

**III. Old Business**

- Precision Nutrition FY23/24 R&A Report

Ms. Simmons gave an update on the Precision Nutrition (PN) FY23/24 R&A Report. The report and briefing memo were routed to the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) to review September 2024. There were a few questions from the USDA PN working group about the recommendations that the NAREEE PN Ad-hoc group provided on the PN report. It was advised that the two working groups meet to discuss the recommendations before the USDA working group provide their comments on the recommendations. Ms. Simmons is in the process of setting up the meeting. Once the recommendations have been addressed, she will forward the report, briefing memo, and an acknowledgement letter from the Secretary to the OCS to review. If cleared from OCS, the package will route to the REE front office for review/approval, and then to the Secretary's office for their review and acknowledgement.

- National Genetic Resources Advisory Council (NGRAC) Crop Vulnerability Report

Ms. Simmons gave an update on the Crop Vulnerability report. The report with the recommendations and briefing memo was routed to the OCS for review September 2024. It was advised that Agricultural Research Service (ARS) crop/genetic subject matter experts review the report and address the nine recommendations that the NGRAC provided. Once the recommendations have been addressed, the report, briefing memo, and an acknowledgement letter from the Secretary will be routed to the OCS for their review and clearance, then to the REE front office, and then to the Secretary's office for their review and acknowledgement.

DFO Lewis stated that there is a new ARS National Program Leader for the plant side of the National Plant Germplasm Program. She will be meeting with the NGRAC and is involved at a leadership level. We're most certain that she will make sure the current NGRAC plant focused reports and recommendations will get the acknowledgement that they need and deserve. DFO Lewis requested that the



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next EXECOM meeting scheduled for February 4<sup>th</sup> be moved to February 11<sup>th</sup> to include the entire NAREEE Advisory Board. They will have a chance to review the Crop report prior to the February 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and vote on it during the meeting.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions or comments.

A Member asked what can be done to elevate the reports after they are finalized to make positive changes? DFO Lewis stated that she will bring the question up in the February or March meeting. We can also bring the question up to the new administration once they're in place.

**IV. New Business**

- Update: Release of USDA's FY25-FY26 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy

DFO Lewis contacted Chris Alvarez, USDA Chief Data and AI officer. USDA recently released their FY25 and FY26 AI strategy as it relates to USDA business. Mr. Alvarez has agreed to give a summary of the AI strategy at the February NAREEE Board meeting. He is interested in having the NAREEE Board members read the strategy and then answer questions on its development strategy, implementation, and evaluation. DFO Lewis stated that she will have Ms. Simmons collect questions from the Board members prior to the meeting for Mr. Alvarez to address at the February meeting.

- Update: FY25 Citrus Disease Subcommittee (CDS) work Given Emergency Citrus Disease Research Extension (ECDRE) Status

DFO Lewis stated that the CDS is mandated yearly to review grants that USDA's (NIFA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture provides to citrus producers to address citrus greening. The grant program ranges from about \$20 to \$40 million dollars which is called the ECDRE. This program is not funded in FY25 with the Farm Bill extension. We will be meeting with the NIFA ECDRE team to determine how this will impact CDS' work this year. DFO Lewis will update the NAREEE Board as new information becomes available.

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



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- Letter to incoming USDA Secretary Rollins from Farmers on Prioritizing Diversification of Agricultural Production

Dr. Will Lytle discussed and compiled some information about a letter to incoming USDA Secretary Brook Rollins. The letter was written by the Agree, DFS Working Group. He presented a PowerPoint about diversification of agricultural production. The new administration would like to make sure profitable crops are grown here at home and have new markets for farmers and ranchers. They are asking producers to sign the letter which will also be sent to the incoming USDA Secretary. The PowerPoint covered:

- Practices
  - Row Crops and Other Annual Crops  
New crops to rotations, utilizing cover crops, strip cropping, intercropping, and building agroforestry systems like
  - Livestock Producers and Ranchers  
Intensive rotational grazing, multi-species grazing systems, and Silva pasture systems *which make farms and ranches stronger and more stable in the face of extreme rain and drought*
  - Perennial conservation elements  
Pollinator plantings, hedgerows and buffer strips, which support soil health, water quality and biodiversity.
- Benefits Described
  - Profitability and resilience for our operations, regardless of what we grow
  - Critical redundancy and multiple sources of revenue
  - Innovative business models, increased productivity and more efficient use of resources.
  - Reduces the need for inputs like fertilizer, feed, pest control, and weed management
  - Domestic supply chain that feeds, clothes, and fuels American communities.
  - Reduces our dependence on imports and uncertain export markets.



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A member asked what is the purpose of getting involved?

Dr. Lytle received the letter as he had participated in previous AGree working group activities. It was requested that the letter be forwarded on to farmers and to make your networks aware. The topic was brought up today mainly for the EXECOM's information.

A member stated that it would be good to discuss the letter at the NAREEE Board meeting in February or March to see how we can keep engagement of this topic.

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

**V. Wrap-Up/Adjourn**

Approved meeting minutes may be found [here](#)

Recurring EXECOM meetings will take place the 1st Tuesday of each month

Next meeting: Tues 2/11/25, 12–1:30 pm ET

The meeting adjourned at 1:09 p.m. ET.