



MINUTES
Joint IR-4 Commodity Liaison
Committee/Project Management
Spring 2025 Meeting
March 4-6, 2025
Hybrid Meeting - Washington D.C.

MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

Motions/Consensus Items:

1. A motion to approve the PMC minutes for the Fall 2025 and Special Meeting of February 6, 2025, was made by Todd Scholz, seconded by Jerry Baron; **unanimously approved.**
2. A motion was made to approve the "Track B" Commodity Liaison Committee membership list as proposed and extend the end date to 2029, by Todd Scholz; seconded by Mike Bledsoe; **unanimously approved.** Members whose term extended include Mark Arney, National Watermelon Board; James Cranney, California Citrus Quality Council; William Frantz, The Cranberry Institute; Rachel Roberts, American Mushroom Institute; Todd Scholz, USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council; Alan Schreiber, Agricultural Development Group, Inc.; and Lee VanWychen, Weed Science Society of America.
3. A motion was made to maintain coordinated meeting coverage, when appropriate, and to implement a google sheet to log planned meeting attendance by Matt Hengel, seconded by Jerry Baron; **unanimously approved.**
4. A motion to adjourn the regular session at 4:44 pm and to move to Executive Session was made by Jerry Baron; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; **unanimously approved.**
5. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:04 pm by Alvin Simmons seconded by Liwei Gu; **unanimously approved.**

Motions/Consensus Votes Made Via Email In-Between Regular Meetings:

None.

Action Items:

1. **Action Item (PMC):** to discuss the Network Expansion Taskforce goals with the regions and revisit the items discussed in an interim or Summer PMC meeting.
2. **Action Item (Baron):** Consolidate various documents and information into Governance Bylaws for the Project Management Committee.

Members:

Michael Aerts; CLC
Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director
Zach Bagley; CLC
Michael Bledsoe; CLC

Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor-NCR
Maggie Elliot; CLC
Liwei Gu; Regional Director-SOR
Mary Hausbeck; Regional Director NCR

Members Continued:

Matt Hengel; PMC Chair; Regional Director-WR
Marcel Holyoak; Administrative Adviser – WR
Bob Jones; CLC
Steve Lommel; Administrative Adviser- HQ
Michael Martin; CLC
Armando Monterroso; CLC
Pete Nelson; CLC
Rachel Roberts; CLC
Todd Scholz; CLC Chair

Alvin Simmons; USDA-ARS
Laura Shumow; CLC
Michelle Starke; CLC
Barry Tanner; CLC
Steve Salisbury; CLC
Johnathan Saranger; CLC
Amy Upton; CLC
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director - NER

Presenters:

Alice Axtell, IR-4 HQ
Bill Barney; IR-4 HQ
David Beaudreau; DCLRS
Jimmy Byrtus; IR-4 HQ
Debbie Carpenter; IR-4 HQ
Krystal Chojnacki; IR-4 HQ
Christina Dineen; IR-4 HQ
Brent Elrod USDA-NIFA
Anna Gore; MUF

Johanna Mazlo; IR-4 HQ
Manjit Mirsa; USDA NIFA
Philip Moore; IR-4 HQ
Kimberly Nesci; USDA OPMP
Jaimin Patel; IR-4 HQ
Hannah Ross; IR-4 HQ
Dan Rossi; IR-4 HQ
Robert Welker; IR-4 HQ

Tuesday March 4, 2025 9:30 am

Matt Hengel called the meeting to order at 9:47 am. –

- Welcome and comments from the current PMC and CLC Chairs: (Hengel & Scholz)
 - M. Hengel initiated introductions around the room and on Zoom.
- Approval of minutes, new agenda items. (Handout)
 - M. Hengel asked the PMC if there were any changes to be made to the minutes presented; none offered.
 - **A motion to approve the PMC minutes for the Fall 2025 and Special Meeting of February 6, 2025, was made by Todd Scholz, seconded by Jerry Baron; unanimously approved.**
 - No new agenda items were requested.
- 2024 IR-4 Year End Summary (Handout) -
 - J. Baron presented the statistics from the 2024 Annual Report and Year End Summary document, reporting: that 2024 was a successful year:
 - i. Food Program - IR-4 data/submissions support 52 new tolerances that extrapolate out to 1,024 new product uses. Baron also reviewed upcoming challenges with EPA reviews of new submissions. New research- there were 394 residue trials contributing to 53 Magnitude of Residue studies; 148 efficacy/crop safety trials contributing to 74 product performance projects, and 62 field trials contributing to 35 Integrated Solutions projects. Also there were 3 biopesticide submissions made.
 - ii. EH Program - 671 field and greenhouse trials that contributed to 56 projects;

J. Baron further reported on new information videos produced to assist with recruiting new researchers and stakeholders.

- CLC Report (Scholz)
 - Membership report (Presentation)
 - i. T. Scholz provided an update on: the purpose of this annual meeting; the need to approve the extension of the Track B memberships list
 - a. **A motion was made to approve the “Track B” Commodity Liaison Committee membership list as proposed and extend the end date to 2029, by Todd Scholz; seconded by Mike Bledsoe; unanimously approved. Members whose term extended include Mark Arney, National Watermelon Board; James Cranney, California Citrus Quality Council; William Frantz, The Cranberry Institute; Rachel Roberts, American Mushroom Institute; Todd Scholz, USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council; Alan Schreiber, Agricultural Development Group, Inc.; and Lee VanWychen, Weed Science Society of America.**
 - ii. T. Scholz further reported on the status of the Friends of IR-4 including: Status of membership and Board members;
- Advocacy Plans - Beaudreau reported that the Congressional visits are being conducted by regional teams this year; reviewed the annual ask of \$25 million; reviewed key takeaways and meeting flow; and the Congressional reception at the House Agriculture Committee Meeting Room.
 - i. A discussion was held regarding dropping off the one-pagers at offices who did not have time to meet and ask when their schedule for appropriation requests is; the logistics for the hill visits; the high quality of the preparation materials; and to express the large delegation making these visits on behalf of IR-4 this week.
 - ii. T. Scholz commended Johnathan Sarager’s leadership of the CLC Government Affairs Committee.
 - iii. H. Ross presented the contents of the Hill visit informational folders, and the regional team leads decided they would be responsible for bringing packets for the group.
- Status of Funding/Grants
 - Jerry Baron reported Congress has not addressed the FY 2025 appropriation; there may be a 1% cut; this year we are due for a full 4 year grant proposal; the implications of delays in funding coming in and partner university responses; ARS cuts of the umbrella account are looking to be permanent moving forward and what work those funds supported
 - A discussion was held regarding the impacts of budget cuts on this year’s continuing resolution versus next year’s budget; the length of the umbrella account funds coming in the past (15 years); the investment University of Maryland Eastern Shore has made to dedicate a new greenhouse to this project and their university efforts to express the importance of these funds.
 - J. Baron reported on the status of NRSP funds; that IR-4 is up for the 5 year review; the NRSP board has recommended a 15% reduction to NRSP-4 to support other projects; the renewal package was submitted in January and included two scenarios, one with the cut and the other fully funded with a justification for such; and that we will hear back in late spring. A discussion was held regarding asking this group for support for the full funding of NRSP funds and whether or not Hatch funding has remained level.
 - J. Baron reported that universities are facing looming reductions in indirect costs and the implications of loss of revenue to the universities; hiring freezes that may occur as a result;

and how the national IR-4 program is working to internally implement savings, namely on travel.

- A discussion was held regarding university reactions to indirect cost loss, what services those fund, and whether or not the cuts were imposed to all universities across the nation.

Break at 10:56 am. The meeting reconvened at 11:10 pm. –

- Global Harmonization of Pesticides/Minor Use Foundation (Presentation)
 - A. Gore presented on: funding from the USDA FAS Assisting Specialty Crop Exports funds were frozen in February not long after it was awarded and resulted in cancelled studies; holding priority setting exercise and they received over 5,000 nominations as a result and reviewed those nominations; they are now holding a 5 week exercise for industry to submit solutions for the nominations; the finalization of the priority setting process will be in May; and they are looking at areas where there is overlap with IR-4 Priorities and IR-4 data to get a Codex MRL.
- Priority Setting/New Research(Handout)
 - A. Axtell reported on the outcomes of the Priority Setting session including: 28% requires only residue data, 42% requires residue and product performance, and 30% efficacy data only; the total number of Product Performance trials versus residue; regional allocations and priority distribution by discipline; reviewed the resource allocations to support the various trials and what remains to be allocated.
 - A. Axtell reported on the Integrated Solutions Priority setting outcomes including: the 12 priorities and the associated studies and trials allocated; the distribution of trials by discipline; and the resource allocation.
 - A discussion was held regarding: if the State of California budget cuts will impact the CDFA funds; what constitutes a carryover project and the high number of these types of projects; how many third party funders there are for these projects; and an ask was made to put together how much they actually need to fully complete projects for the congressional asks.
 - A. Axtell reported on the recent Industry Technology Session; important deadlines for the 2025 priority setting cycle; and reviewed a draft agenda for the 2025 Food Use Workshop to be held in Denver, Colorado September 9-11.
 - A brief discussion was held regarding ways of working with the EPA in the future given the current uncertainties.

Break for working lunch at 11:49 pm.

- Dr. Manjit Mirsa, Director of USDA-NIFA, delivered a lunch address expressing the importance of science communications. He specifically pointed out that NIFA has been leveraging the land-grant system for over 60 years in its support of the IR-4 Project; that IR-4 is a critical component of solving pest challenges into the future; how fortunate the US is with our agricultural production versus some places abroad; and the importance of working together to achieving mutual goals for agriculture.
- A brief discussion was held regarding future technological advances in agriculture and when the RFAs may be released.

The meeting reconvened at 1:18 pm.—

- Reboot of Integrated Solutions (IS) Platform (Handout)
 - A. Axtell reported on: the goals and deliverables of the IS program; the technological requirements for inclusion in IS studies; project start date deferrals; limiting the number of annual priorities; priority allocations for equity; oversight and planning working groups; and enhancing outreach efforts for this particular program.
 - A discussion was held as to whether or not this research was being published in peer review journals (yes).
- Comments from USDA- Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP)
 - K. Nesci reported on the charge of the OPMP when it was developed to represent the needs of the growers; the OPMP group is a small one but many came with expertise from the US EPA; and both participates and reviews interagency decisions in the implementation of EPA strategies to provide growers support for implementation.
 - A brief discussion was held regarding if OPMP gets involved in tariffs, if crop summaries have been helpful to OPMP (yes especially if citable); how the CLC can help share the importance of OPMP to specialty crop growers; and IR-4 thanked this group for all of their work.
- Status of Executive Director Search (Handout)
 - K. Chojnacki reported on: the IR-4 Executive Director position will continue to report to the Associate Dean and Director of the NC Agricultural Research Service; Dr. David Monks will be charged with serving as the Search Committee Chair; committee make-up requirements at NC State; the DRAFT job description; and current outreach efforts of the upcoming position.
 - A brief discussion was held regarding timing of the transition and if a search firm will be used.
- Awards
 - J. Baron presented a National Hall of Fame Award to Dr. Dan Rossi to honor the legacy of his career, his exemplary service to agriculture and the specialty crop community, and service in support of the IR-4 project in his various administrator roles.
 - J. Baron presented a SOAR award to Dr. Kim Nesci for her dedication to the specialty crop community in the areas of Service, Outreach, Altruism, and Research.

Break at 2:50 pm. The meeting reconvened at 3:32 pm. –

- Management Reports
 - Administrative Advisors
 - i. D. Buhler reported: on working with Jerry to get the NRSP renewal submitted through a new agency administering the program; that Jerry is scheduled to give educational presentations to the NRSP Directors on IR-4; that the justification for maintaining full funding was well developed; and asked the group to put in a good word with the state experiment station directors.
 - ii. S. Lommel reported: that there is still great excitement to host IR-4; instituted a hiring pause to understand the financial impacts of new orders and an exception process; many leadership changes in CALS but feels that IR-4 is institutionalized enough at NC State to continue their good works; and that they are installing fiber into almost every experiment station.

- iii. M. Holyoak reported: are searching for a new dean of College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; the State of California has delayed payments to the University of California and are expecting a 10% deficit in the coming year; and Dr. Hengel got promoted to Full Adjunct Professor.

Break at 2:45 pm. The meeting reconvened at 3:08 pm. –

- Regional/ARS Reports (Handouts)
 - i. NER: S. Zebelo provided a report on 2024 activities including: UMES has a new Associate Dean for Research starting this month; three new university wide systems rolled out recently; 26 food use trials conducted; 14 performance trials conducted; 14 environmental horticulture; and 6 integrated solutions trials.
 - ii. NCR: M. Hausbeck provided a report on 2024 activities including: researchers in the region have been working to implement the eFDB and work through challenges; there are challenges with attracting new researchers and working through delayed funding; and reviewed the number of field trials completed in the region.
 - iii. SOR: L. Gu provided a report on 2024 activities including: Kristen Searer-Jones was hired as the new RFC; a new Chemist – Dr. Isil Gazioglu- has started in the Analytical lab and the lab is on track to have a more successful year in 2025; the QA unit has finished 100% of their work for 2024; and submitted a grant to the Florida State Department of Agriculture to support IR-4 work.
 - iv. WR: M. Hengel provided a report on 2024 activities including: K. Arnold has been working to develop networks and running the field program; filled a FRD position at Oregon state; other platform areas (EHC, IS) are working well; working through the university to get funding out to researchers; the analytical lab completed 11 ASRs but are delayed with storage stability data needed; still working on seismic retrofits on lab building; and they have hired Laurel Hsieh to fill the QA vacancy.
 - v. ARS: A. Simmons reported: that none of the ARS IR-4 team members have been separated from ARS at this time; while there are uncertainties of funding outlook spirits remain high; the Wapato lab has elevated performance since this time last year; the existing five year cooperative agreement with IR-4 HQ expires in July 2025 and at this time there are no funds to support a new agreement; and A. Simmons will be getting trained to conduct QC on eFDB.
 - A discussion was held regarding how vacancies and travel are being handled right now.
 - A. Simmons further reported that the ARS agency Head, Dr. Simon Liu, has announced his retirement.
 - vi. HQ Report (handout) - J. Baron reported: on new responsibilities assigned to HQ staff; the recruitment process for the Environmental Horticulture Manager; and the relationship at NC State continues to thrive with participation on committees and graduate committees.
 - vii. Financial - K. Chojnacki reported on potential delays in no-cost extension or closeout; preparations for the 2025 No Cost Extension; researcher end dates will end on 4/30/2026 as will subawards off the prime

The meeting recessed for the evening 4:07 pm –

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 8:30 am

Matt Hengel reconvened the meeting at 8:40 am --

A brief discussion was held to discuss the coordination of Hill visits for the CLC members, the \$25 million ask with Congress and the upcoming Congressional Reception.

- Program Reports
 - Food Program (Handout)
 - i. Field Program & Submissions: C. Marconi reported: on field data books status through early March 2025; discussed challenges associated with not getting completed field data books according to timelines from FRDs and the analytical backlog;
 - ii. T. Pike reported: there were 8 tolerance actions resulted in 1,024 uses; 9 submissions made in 2024 as well as one final report provided to the registrant for submission; provided crop group updates; and discussed external issues that present challenges such as ESA, lack of submission documents until labels have issued from EPA and others.
 - A discussion was held regarding pollinator study delays, the reduction of studies over the decade in the field research program, and the impact of FDB being submitted late.
 - iii. Laboratory Analysis: C. Dineen reported on: the current status of the backlog and plans for addressing it at Tifton, Wapato, WR Lab and SOR Lab; and the status of the studies at contract labs.
 - iv. Alternative to Storage Stability: M. Hengel reported: that the storage stability is causing delays in ASR; proposed to send storage stability projects to contract labs or to an ARS laboratory
 - An in-depth discussion was held regarding which lab would do method development and day zero, the time benefits to parsing that requirement out, and whether this is moving one problem from one lab to another.
 - Quality Assurance (Handout)
 - i. J. Mazlo reported on: EPA compliance and monitoring; reviewed the activities of the unit including participation on committees, inspections performed, and updating eQA system; QA's work on audit activities of the eFDB; provided a multi-year look at audit and inspections conducted; and provided an update on eQA and eDocs.

Break at 10:05 am. The meeting reconvened at 10:25 am. –

- Product Performance Research & Integrated Solutions (IS) Platform (Handout)
 - i. A. Axtell reported on: 51 final reports have been submitted out of 148 product performance trials; 12 Integrated Solutions priorities have been completed with 27 reports received out of 62 IS trials; shared deliverables from recent IS studies and associated publications; and reviewed outreach efforts of the Biology Team.
- Biopesticide Regulatory Support (Handout)
 - i. B. Barney reported on: pending or submitted projects this year sent to the EPA; submission packages in development; and recent requests assessed through the new vetting process.
 - ii. A brief discussion was held regarding the ease of use of the new vetting process.
- Environmental Horticulture(Handout)

- i. J. Byrtus reported: that 3 new projects have been assigned this year, reviewed which regions trials have been assigned in; and shared a highlight on a potential label change for control of Cornear worms on conifer seed orchards.
- Communications (Handout)
 - i. H. Ross reported on: print, digital and identity updates; completion and posting of the 2024 annual report and YES document; brand refresh on marketing positions; recent stories produced and published; social media highlights; impacts of the newsletter; job promotion efforts; event promotion; award updates from the past year; and provided a preview of the new Intranet.
 - ii. A discussion was held regarding photo shares; if there are leads for each section of the website; if shared drive protected items would be on the intranet; if eduroam can be used for login; search ability in google and key words; and password protections.
- Education & Training Committee (Handout)
 - C. Dineen reported on: planning efforts underway for the 2026 National Education Conference; national SOPs in progress and upcoming SOPs; advisories to National SOPs updates and retirements; and virtual trainings offered.
 - Path Forward 2.0
 - Training Modules (Handout)
 - R. Welker reported: that the outline of new employee orientation topics is complete; presentations are being built; on next steps for internal review; and hosting the trainings on the new intranet.
 - Technology Team (Handout)
 - J. Byrtus reported on: three companies that gave previews of their products to update and standardize our database and the pro's and con's of each; and costs estimated around \$60k and maintenance fees of \$45k per year.
 - A discussion was held regarding cost structure, making the database public and used for other needs worldwide; data ownership; issues with hosting eFDB data in the "new" database; and if there are AI capabilities with the new databases.
 - Network Expansion Taskforce (NET) (Handout)
 - J. Patel reported: on the NET goals; there were 15 new researchers who conducted trials in Plant Pathology and Weed Science in 2024 and 2025; highlighted a published article highlighting IR-4; and reported on talks and poster presentations held recently.
 - S. Zebelo updated that UMES held a small farm conference and Marylee Ross presented on the IR-4 Project.
 - A discussion was held about focusing on the second goal of recruiting new researchers, original goal alignment, research projects dominating time and getting consensus with the Department, GLP researchers being the more difficult researcher to report, ARS researchers retiring, the two goals might be mutually exclusive, and add to website for people to submit their CV and the biologists can manage the list and centrally manage a list.
 - **Action Item (PMC):** to discuss the Network Expansion Taskforce goals with the regions and revisit the items discussed in an interim or Summer PMC meeting.
- Electronic Field Data Book (eFDB) (Handout)
 - P. Moore reported: on the eFDB changes for 2025 trials; changes to forms; on a new administrator- David Schnatter; future issues that are being reviewed to be addressed; the future QC and varying perspectives from participants/administrators.

- A discussion was held regarding average findings, how many FRDs have not had an eFDB QC, and RFCs would like to stay a part of the process.
- J. Baron reported: that with the eFDB being electronic – the need to move to electronic signature; acceptable programs with the EPA and offered at the land grants; and releasing an SOP with the move to electronic signature.
- A discussion was held regarding the cost of licenses, use of DocuSign, the discussion was tabled to allow time to consider the implications.

The meeting recessed for Lunch at 12:20 noon and reconvened at 1:19pm –

- Coordination of meeting coverage
 - J. Baron reported: this item was related to cost saving activities around travel – maintaining coordinated coverage at meetings; and establish a google sheet to coordinate meetings among the regions.
 - **A motion was made to maintain coordinated meeting coverage, when appropriate, and to implement a google sheet to log planned meeting attendance by Matt Hengel, seconded by Jerry Baron; unanimously approved.**
- Upcoming Meetings (Handout)
 - K. Chojnacki shared the upcoming dates and asked everyone to populate their calendars.
 - Summer PMC meeting: July 8-10, Virtual
 - 2025 Food Program Workshop: September 9-11, Denver CO
 - 2025 EH Workshop: October 7-8, Kansas City, MO
 - Fall PMC meeting: October 8-10, Kansas City, MO
 - NRPM: October 28-29, Raleigh, NC
 - National Education Conference: February 3-5, Charleston, SC
 - 2026 Joint CLC/PMC meeting: March 3-5, Washington DC
 - A. Axtell noted that this is a centralized document to capture the upcoming meetings and deadlines and will be a living document on the intranet.
- Other topics/Adjourn Regular Meeting Session

A motion to adjourn the regular session at 4:44 pm and to move to Executive Session was made by Jerry Baron; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; unanimously approved.

Break at 2:06 pm. The meeting reconvened into Executive Session at 2:19 pm. –

- Executive Session

The meeting recessed for the evening at 3:30 pm.--

Thursday March 6, 2025 - 8:30 am

Matt Hengel reconvened the Executive Session at 8:31 am. –

Break at 10:10 am. The meeting reconvened at 10:30 am. –

The members reconvened from Executive Session at 11:22 am with no motions and the following reportable action item:

- **Action Item (Baron):** Consolidate various documents and information into Governance Bylaws for the Project Management Committee.
- Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:04 pm by Alvin Simons seconded by Liwei Gu; unanimously approved.