



MINUTES
Project Management Committee
Fall 2025 Meeting
October 8-10, 2025
Hybrid Meeting - Kansas City, MO

MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

Motions/Consensus Items:

1. A motion to approve the 2025 PMC Summer Meeting minutes with typographical corrections as suggested was made by Jerry Baron, seconded by Simon Zebelo; **approved (2 absent – L. Gu & A. Simmons).**
2. **Consensus:** The Regions would like to maintain the option to perform a quality control (QC) review of field databooks. It was agreed that further QC reviews would be performed at the discretion of the Regions and any cost for the QC would come from the Region Core budget. (2 absent – L. Gu & A. Simmons).
3. A motion was made to recess the meeting for the evening by Matt Hengel; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; **approved (2 absent – L. Gu & A. Simmons).**
4. A motion was made by Todd Scholz to add Atticus Finger, from the American Sugar Cane League, to the Commodity Liaison Committee, seconded by Jerry Baron; **approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
5. A motion was made to not refill residue studies dropped at or after the National Research Planning Meeting (NRPM) but instead reallocate funds to contract labs to help with the backlog, was made by Matt Hengel, seconded by Liwei Gu; **approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
6. A motion was made that: starting with new uses, IR-4 will move forward with requiring all hemp requests split into seed/grain hemp, industrial/fiber hemp, and cannabinoid hemp; each request will require their own priority & residue study protocol; and that stakeholders recognize that limited IR-4 resources should only go to seed/grain hemp, and empower IR-4 HQ to make adjustments as needed to existing requests was made by Jerry Baron, seconded by Todd Scholz; **approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
7. A motion was made for IR-4 Headquarters to have the discretion to put projects rated as “orange” during the EPA stop light analysis on hold and not have them part of the prioritization process by Todd Scholz, seconded by Mary Hausbeck; **approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
8. **Consensus:** to move forward with a joint meeting with Ag- Food Canada’s Pest Management Centre for the Summer PMC Meeting in Canada.
9. A motion was made to:
 - 1) Reduce total funding for the IS priorities established at the 2024 Milwaukee Food Use Workshop by \$100,000 + IDC which will be distributed evenly to the two IR-4 Analytical Labs, with priority given to remaining IS priorities that are bio based/organic projects for the remaining funds; and
 - 2) Eliminate funding for IS priorities established at the 2025 Denver Food Use Workshop with \$150,000 moved to H+ and \$450,000 split evenly to each of the two regions who have Analytical labs; and
 - 3) that this motion is being brought forth to address the additional lab capacity needed to respond to the closure of the Michigan and Wapato Labs; and
 - 4) Future IS funding will be revisited once budgetary pressures are lessened,by Jerry Baron; seconded by Liwei Gu; **approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**

10. A motion to adjourn the regular session meeting at 11:50 am on October 10, 2025 was made by Todd Scholz; seconded by Simon Zebelo; **approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
- 11.

Votes Made Between Regular Meetings:

1. Matt Hengel made a motion to nominate and approve Jerry Baron as a recipient of the prestigious Hall of Fame Award; seconded by Alvin Simmons. **Approved by majority via written consent (1 absent: Jerry Baron).**

Members:

Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director
Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor-NCR
Liwei Gu; Regional Director-SOR
Mary Hausbeck; Regional Director - NCR
Matt Hengel; PMC Chair; Regional Director-WR

Marcel Holyoak; Administrative Advisor - WR
Moses Kairo; Administrative Advisor-NER
Todd Scholz; CLC Chair
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director - NER

Presenters:

Alice Axtell, IR-4 HQ
Bill Barney; IR-4 HQ
David Beaudreau; DCLRS
Donna Bouffard; IR-4 HQ
Jimmy Byrtus; IR-4 HQ
Debbie Carpenter; IR-4 HQ

Krystal Chojnacki; IR-4 HQ
Josh Kindel; IR-4 HQ
Johanna Mazlo; IR-4 HQ
Philip Moore; IR-4 HQ
Thomas Pike; IR-4 HQ
Hannah Ross; IR-4 HQ

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm ET

Matt Hengel called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm.–

1. Welcome and Introductions approval of minutes (Handout) and new agenda items.
 - M. Hengel welcomed the group, noted that we will move around agenda items to accommodate travel schedules, and initiated introductions around the room and on Zoom.
 - M. Hengel asked the PMC if there were any additional changes to be made to the minutes, several typos were corrected; none additional offered.
 - **A motion to approve the 2025 PMC Summer Meeting minutes with typographical corrections as suggested was made by Jerry Baron, seconded by Simon Zebelo; unanimously approved.**
2. Path Forward 2.0 Check-in
 - New Technology
 - eFDB & Quality Control for the 2026 eField Databook (Handout)
 - P. Moore provided an update on: a proposal to improve national communications by using a ticketing system called ServiceNow; iAdvantage software bugs and improvements to the system for the upcoming year; eSignatures; and the transition of lead eFDB administrator to Jimmy Byrtus.
 - A discussion was held regarding: the objective of the ticketing system; if the system would achieve the level of service intended; if folks from the field have given feedback on a ticket system; if the glitches with the eFDB this year correlate to the uptick on the incoming inquiries; having quality checks

on the outgoing eFDB's; keeping the ability for direct calls in the case of time sensitive issues; and ways to keep the costs down.

- P. Moore further reported on QC for eField Databooks reporting: the re-occurring question of whether or not to maintain QC; reviewed the seven steps involved in the field databook review process; and outlined the options associated with maintaining QC, modifying it or discontinuing it.
- A discussion was held regarding: if QC is removed, would funding for QC be pulled back from the region from core funding (no), and the need to review budgets before making cuts; the intent was to be an early warning system for QA to reduce costs; whether or not the field staff is ready to cut QC; discontinuing – or not- the use of contract QC; and a proposal to decide to end QC, or moved to a random sampling, when the issues noted are reduced. Several PMC members expressed interest in keeping QC for the time. PMC asked the RFCs in attendance to share their thoughts and those included: struggles with the change to eFDB's; staffing changes impacting QC; tracking findings and revisiting in Fall of next year; and regional QA would like QC to continue as they look for different errors than QC.
- **Consensus:** The Regions would like to maintain the option to perform a quality control (QC) review of eFDB's. It was agreed that future QC reviews would be performed at the discretion of the Regions and any cost for the QC would come from the Region Core budget. (2 absent – L. Gu & A. Simmons).
- Updating Databases (Handout)
 - J. Byrtus provided an update on the Technology Team including: database updates on hold right now; recommended using a paid eSignature; assisting with a new master contact list; and improvements to the Environmental Horticulture database.
- **A motion was made to recess the meeting for the evening by Matt Hengel; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; approved (2 absent – L. Gu & A. Simmons).**

Thursday October 9, 2025 8:00 am to 5:00 pm CT

Matt Hengel reconvened the meeting at 8:04 am.

- eQA (Handout)
 - J. Mazlo provided an update on the eQA Software update, what changes the update included, and that the validation SOP is complete.
 - A discussion was held regarding if the look was going to change (no) and all materials will still be in there for the labs.
 - Communications
 - H. Ross reported on: latest news stories released and upcoming stories; social media engagement and growth; event information; updated one-pagers; award updates; intranet updates; and transition of items off the main website.
 - Analytical backlog
 - It was noted that this topic will be covered in a later agenda item.
3. CLC & Friends of IR-4 Update
- T. Scholz reported: there is one new member of the CLC up for nomination, Atticus Finger of the American Sugar Cane League, who was recommended by Herman Waguespack for approval to the CLC; the CLC voted to add Atticus Finger as a CLC member and recommended approval by the PMC; and that Todd will be retiring in the summer next year and has formed a committee to help determine a new Chairperson for the CLC.

- A discussion was held regarding adding a CLC member from Crop Life, as well as from NASDA.
- **A motion was made by Todd Scholz to add Atticus Finger, from the American Sugar Cane League, to the Commodity Liaison Committee, seconded by Jerry Baron; approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
- D. Beaudreau reported: most offices are still operating on the Hill; thinks a week from now they will be closer to finding a solution for the budget with a short term continuing resolution; the farm bill is still in a holding pattern and likely won't be passed this year; the plans for 2026 the Friends of IR-4 will get requests into the OMB office to meet with staff and speak to them about getting a line item in the President's budget request for next year; early 2026 will submit appropriation requests to key offices where Friends of IR-4 have a presence; and planning for March visit and will try and get the same room for a reception when government opens back up.

4. Management Reports

- Administrative Advisors
 - D. Buhler reported that: IR-4 successfully got the NRSP funding renewed for the next 5 years although the budget took a bit of a cut; and that a priority for the new Executive Director will be to reach out and continue the good relationship with the research station directors.
 - Marcel Holyoak reported that; there is a new dean who is settling in and is supportive of IR-4; new opportunities at UC Davis including a new AI in agriculture center and a very large facility with green house, processing and laboratory facilities has been donated to UC Davis; and are keeping an eye on what the government is doing including changes in IDC and how it impacts the work of UC Davis.
 - M. Kairo reported that: they are near completion of a new facility that will add 7,000 sq.ft. of greenhouse space; senior UMES has been advocating for IR-4 during Hill visits showing the strong commitment to the partnership with IR-4 Project; and is looking forward to meeting with the new Ag Innovation chair and is happy to discuss the importance of IR-4 with them.
- NIFA Update
 - J. Baron reported: that he has consistent meetings with the NIFA National Program Leader (Chris Philips); that the CLC and Friends of IR-4 were instrumental in getting the release of the 2025 Grant as well as other program grants; and some food production systems grants did not get funding, and the funds were returned to the US Treasury. Due to the government shutdown, Chris Phillips could not be present.
- ARS Update
 - Due to the government shutdown, ARS representatives could not be present.
- Regional/ARS Updates
 - S. Zebelo (Handout) reported: thanked Marylee and the team at UMES; updated on the status of field research and reports submitted for the food and environmental horticulture program; subawards are working well underway and new 2025 subawards will be released in the next few weeks; sample bags continue to increase and asked the regions to provide their sample bag needs quickly; updated on events and priority setting meetings in the region; and meetings were held regarding partnerships with Lange Research and ACDS trucking.
 - M. Hausbeck reported: the North Central Region has been busy with EPA inspections; Interesting b/c the South Dakota site was already decommissioned; the status QC in the region; status of QA inspections; status of field research underway for the food and environmental horticulture programs; the success of regional visits

from Jerry Baron and Josh Kindel; the positive result of Jerry and Nicole attending the ginseng field day; exploring new ways to provide recognition to people in the regions who contribute to the work of IR-4; and the change in the host department at MSU for the NCR for both funding and employee placement.

- A discussion was held regarding team recognition and building community among IR-4 contributors.
- L. Gu (Handout) reported: on tracking of eFDB submissions for 2024 and 2025; the field site at Homestead has been decommissioned; new personnel at the analytical lab and a new instrument; status of laboratory analytical summary reports; and that QA is preparing for EPA audits.
 - A discussion was held regarding the decommissioning of the Homestead site.
- K. Arnold reported: on the priority setting preparation and the success of the Food Use Workshop; strengthening the relationship with CDPR; two new SLR's; working on planning trials; tours and conferences attended to educate about IR-4; upcoming retirements; UC Davis sponsored programs is under new leadership; and the environmental horticulture workshop was a success. M. Hengel reported: that QA in the WR has been helping with EPA inspections; seismic retrofits are still underway in Sprocket Hall where the lab is located; the status of ASRs; and Bronson will retire next summer, there is a new hire Jeff Eichler, and other staffing changes.
 - A discussion was held regarding the seismic retrofits and to retain test substances for upcoming EPA audits.
- J. Baron reported on behalf of ARS: the Wapato lab will be decommissioned; there were a few findings from the Wapato Lab audit by EPA; Salinas field site wants to perform field trials in 2026 in spite of issues with completing trials; Wooster site can accommodate early greenhouse work; 3 year Cooperative Agreement with NC State for QA support; and there are unknowns when the government shutdown will end.
 - A discussion was held regarding future work with the Salinas site, using the Salinas site for CRO work, and issues scheduling in-life inspections at Salinas.
- Headquarters Report
 - J. Baron reported: that Roger Batts announced he is retiring on March 1; operating under NC State's salary and hiring cap limits; the study director team is stretched thin with taking on additional duties and are considering blocking time each week to focus on writing reports; Steve Lommel is retiring November 1 and co-interim leads have been named; David Monks is now the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Director; Frank Louws, Head of Horticultural Science, is stepping down at the end of the year; and there is new leadership in the CALS Business Office and complications with processes.
 - K. Chojnacki reported that the search committee has identified 3 candidates that we will be bringing in for in-person interviews in mid to late October.

Break at 10:00 am. The meeting reconvened at 10:20 am.—

5. Program Discussions

- Food Residue/Product Performance Research (Handout)
 - Field Research/Field Data book completions
 - T. Pike reported: three new uses and six submissions in 2025; new uses are down due to the EPA and the change in administration as well as submissions due to gaps in pollinator data required and the laboratory

backlog; crop grouping on cucurbit vegetables information submitted to EPA but no timeline on when it will be updated; reviewed field research projects over the last three years; status of outstanding field data notebooks for 2023 and 2024; regulatory challenges including completion of field data books, report writing, safety finding issues, ESA, registration status in Europe, need for pollinator data, uncertainty with EPA; and improvement on communications with EPA.

- Laboratory Research/ARS (Handout)
 - Decommissioning/Recommissioning of Wapato
 - J. Baron reported: plan is to decommission the site and close the books on it and when recommissioned it will start anew; and that EPA has recently audited the site.
 - D. Carpenter reported: they have transferred most studies and samples that are not being worked on prior to the government shutdown; the EPA audit findings; mapped out how to correct the data with the QA unit; the WR lab has been helping to close out studies; and need to figure out how to handle studies that are not completed before the end of the year.
 - i. A discussion was held regarding a past PMC action to develop a working group to develop a process for the recommissioning of the Wapato Lab.
 - Limitations at Tifton
 - D. Carpenter reported that researchers there are doing a great job in spite of limitations of staff and funding.
 - Backlog report (Handout)
 - D. Carpenter reported: on the backlog status of each of the analytical laboratories; the status of backlog over time; and that the backlog is unsustainable.
 - Discussion of backlog policy changes
 - Ranking potential projects for FUW, advisory or mandatory
 - HQ's ability to redlight chemicals
 - Matching the number of priorities assigned at FUW to laboratory capacity.
 - i. D. Carpenter reported: on the history of the backlog; successes and failures of strategy for preventing future backlog; consequences of backlog and what is actually happening and the causes of the diversion from the plan; the need to address how the capacity of the labs fits the capacity of the field; whether or not the backlog policy should be revised; the laboratory guidance document has been updated and is ready for signature and if we include the backlog policy; and suggestions for revising the policy.
 - ii. A discussion was held regarding: since 2022 communication and updates to the National Laboratory Director has improved and the current policy is different from the 2022 written document; labs have been consulting with each other if there is a problem; the difficulty in climbing out of the backlog; some projects are very complicated and in spite of pivots, are still not resolved; should first discuss how to get out of the

backlog; the fundamental problem is that we are producing more from the field than the lab can handle; prioritization of samples coming into labs and color coding; limitations of lab capacity; being strategic about storage stability; it is a question of how you tell the study; communications around the issue; and lab capacity.

- iii. A discussion was held: to evaluate projects coming into the FUW on their impact on the labs in a short time frame include complexity of commodity, how many ai's or process fractions how many A's they are worth; and if projects drop off, we shouldn't go back and replace them.
- iv. Look at the 2026 projects and evaluate them as a test pilot.

Break at 12:30 pm. The meeting reconvened at 1:13 pm.—

- v. An idea is to keep the number of priorities reduced for an additional 2 years and come up with a project complexity rating system on what was prioritized at the last FUW (# fractions, #ai and ai complexity itself); and increasing capacity at the labs (additional personnel and addressing technology lapses). Dollar figure on what labs need to support one more chemist at each lab and one lease for a higher performing instrument.
 - vi. **A motion was made to not refill residue studies dropped at or after the National Research Planning Meeting (NRPM) but instead reallocate funds to contract labs to help with the backlog, was made by Matt Hengel, seconded by Liwei Gu; approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**
- o Discussion of Hemp Requests (Handout)
 - P. Moore reported: the projects IR-4 has taken on with hemp both for Integrated Solutions projects and residue/product performance projects; reviewed what IR-4 is submitting to EPA; outlined an issue that EPA only accepts residue data to create a new tolerance for food uses while requests are made for all use sites; USDA has updated their definition of hemp to split it into food hemp from cannabinoid hemp; and proposed several options for solutions.
 - A discussion was held: as to if we are currently allowing food and cannabinoid uses; permits required for planting; will only get food uses on registrations until FDA approves cannabinoid as food; and if new hemp projects should be for seed only.
 - **A motion was made that: starting with new uses, IR-4 will move forward with requiring all hemp requests split into seed/grain hemp, industrial/fiber hemp, and cannabinoid hemp; each request will require their own priority & residue study protocol; and that stakeholders recognize that limited IR-4 resources should only go to seed/grain hemp, and empower IR-4 HQ to make adjustments as needed to existing requests was made by**

Jerry Baron, seconded by Todd Scholz; approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).

- QA Activities/EPA Audits (Handout)
 - J. Mazlo reported: on EPA inspections conducted since summer and those upcoming; QA updates on ARS audits; 2025 audit inspection data to date; and eQA & eQA updates.
- Results of Food Use Workshop (Handout)
 - IR-4 Policy on EPA coded orange nominations
 - A. Axtell reported: 140 attendees of which 25% were first time participants; post meeting survey results were positive; H+ projects combined and submitted as IS as well as two orange projects; reduced priorities to divert funding to support contract lab work; 248 nominated projects whittled down to 35 “A” priorities, 2 “A’s” sponsored by other companies; and Integrated solutions projects had 86 nominated and ended with 4 regional, 5 national and 2 sponsored projects.
 - A discussion was held regarding: how many residue projects result from product performance data or Integrated Solutions results; when should IR-4 step in to say orange or above EPA coded projects we need to not move forward with; EPA puts forth effort to give us a clear path forward and we should heed their guidance; and being good stewards of public funds.
 - **A motion was made by Todd Scholz for IR-4 Headquarters to have the discretion to put potential researchable projects assessed as “orange” during the EPA Stop Light analysis on hold and not have them part of the prioritization process, seconded by Mary Hausback; approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).**

Break at 3:16. The meeting reconvened at 3:30 pm.—

- Integrated Solutions (IS) Platform (Handout)
 - Integrated Solutions projects – future?
 - A. Axtell reported: on the history of the IS Platform noting that funding came from the Biopesticide Regulatory Platform; the platform evolved because most of the requests received were directed product screening research (PPWS); while data was generated it was mostly product screening rather than systems based; challenges that lead to IS reboot including , limited resources, outcomes have not reached the broader community and gaps in database tracking; stakeholder feedback obtained in 2024; outcomes of the reboot; the IS outcomes of the 2025 FUW when IS projects were used for lumped together H+ projects; and proposed questions to the PMC on the future of the platform.
 - A discussion was held regarding: background of the 2025 FUW H+ IS project; with herbicides there are not biological options so maybe more money should be moved back to product performance for herbicide; whether or not IS should include screening or not; timing of delaying IS projects and if that will align with screening; constraints of innovation within our budget within a single year; various definitions of innovation; lack of clarity still in the program and its contributions to registration; pivoting to biobased projects only; should residue be included in IS; could these funds

proposed looking at our project list and fund additional field trials or lab analysis for those additional studies to get CODEX or EU approval; issue may be if our labs are asked to analyze additional sample sets; and would we be interested in doing some residue mitigation studies with MUF in 2027.

8. Funding opportunities vs project limitations

- J. Baron reported: internally we struggle with getting opportunities coming our way that we feel conflicted with because of staffing limitations, backlog; at some point the opportunities won't exist anymore and we would have missed out; and down the line we need to think about making that shift and take advantage of some of these opportunities.
- A discussion was held regarding current staffing limitations and workload issues at HQ and analytical reports are different in Canada.

9. Orientation strategy for the new Executive Director

- J. Baron reported: not having overlap with current Executive Director we will need to pivot; Jerry will be available if needed to answer questions; many parts of the job are relationship and so visits with folks and attending meetings will be critical; attending the specialty crop meetings (Minor Crop Farmer's Alliance, Crop Life) and visit the regions; and research station regional director meetings;
- A discussion was held regarding interviews with candidates and the priority of connecting with stakeholders.

10. Awards for NEC (Handout)

- K. Chojnacki reviewed the three awards typically issued at the National Education Conference from the regions and the PMC's role in selecting three recipients of the National Recognition of excellence.

11. Future Meetings

- Schedule a date to decide on National Recognition of Excellence Award recipients after November 5, to be issued at the NEC.
 - The date was determined to be Friday, November 7 at 2:00 pm EST.
- Summer PMC: Remote or try and connect with PMRA.
 - **Consensus:** to move forward with a joint meeting with the with Ag- Food Canada's Pest Management Centre for the Summer PMC Meeting in Canada.
 - A discussion was held regarding the proposed date and not conflicting with Cultivate, (does not); July 7-9, 2026.

The regular session meeting convened into Executive Session at 8:20 am.

Break 8:20. The meeting reconvened to Executive Session at 8:35 am.

12. Executive Session

Break at 10:22 am. The meeting reconvened at 10:40 am.—

The members reconvened into regular session at 11:48 am and shared the following reportable action:

- **A motion was made to:**
 - 1) reduce funding for the IS priorities established at the 2024 Milwaukee Food Use Workshop by \$100,000 + IDC which will be distributed evenly to the two IR-4 Analytical**

Labs, with priority given to remaining IS priorities that are bio based/organic projects for the remaining funds; and

2) Eliminate funding for IS priorities established at the 2025 Denver Food Use Workshop with \$150,000 moved to H+ and \$450,000 split evenly to each of the two regions who have Analytical labs; and

3) that this motion is being brought forth to address the additional lab capacity needed to respond to the closure of the Michigan and Wapato Labs; and

4) Future IS funding will be revisited once budgetary pressures are lessened.

Jerry Baron; seconded by Liwei Gu; approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).

A motion to adjourn the regular session meeting at 11:50 am on October 10, 2025 was made by Todd Scholz; seconded by Simon Zebelo; approved (1 absent – A. Simmons).