



MINUTES
Joint IR-4 Commodity Liaison
Committee/Project Management
Spring 2024 Meeting
March 5-7, 2024
Hybrid Meeting - Washington D.C.

MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

Motions/Consensus Items:

1. A motion to approve the PMC minutes for the Fall 2023, Special Meeting of January 9, 2024, and Special Meeting of January 24, 2024 meetings was made by Liewi Gu, seconded by Todd Scholz; **unanimously approved.**
2. **CLC VOTE:** A motion was made to approve the “Track A” Commodity Liaison Committee membership list by Amy Upton; seconded by Zach Bagley; **unanimously approved.**
3. **CLC VOTE:** A motion was made to approve Todd Scholz as the Chair and Keith Pitts as the Vice Chair by Mike Bledsoe, seconded by Amy Upton; **unanimously approved.**
4. A motion to adjourn the regular session at 4:44 pm and to move to Executive Session was made by Alvin Simmons; seconded by Todd Scholz; **unanimously approved.**
5. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 am by Alvin Simons seconded by Jerry Baron; **unanimously approved.**

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

None.

Action Items:

- **Action Item (Baron/Braverman):** The Biopesticide Regulatory Support Program will establish an enhanced vetting process for projects and an enhanced database tracking system to present and demonstrate both to the PMC at the Summer Meeting.

Members:

Michael Aerts; CLC
Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director
Zach Bagley; CLC
Michael Bledsoe; CLC
John Walk Boatright; CLC
Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor-NCR
Maggie Elliot; CLC
William Frantz; CLC
Rubella Goswami, USDA-NIFA
Liwei Gu; Regional Director-SOR
Matt Hengel; PMC Chair; Regional Director-WR

Marcel Holyoak; Administrative Adviser – WR
Moses Kairo; Administrative Adviser – NER
Robert Kaldunski; CLC
Steve Lommel; Administrative Adviser- HQ
Armando Moterroso; CLC
Joe Munyaneza; Administrative Adviser - ARS
Pete Nelson; CLC
Rachel Pick (for Michael Martin); CLC
Steve Salisbury; CLC
Michelle Samuel-Foo; USDA-NIFA
Johnathan Saranger; CLC

Members Continued:

Todd Scholz; CLC Chair
Alvin Simmons; USDA-ARS
Barry Tanner; CLC

Amy Upton; CLC
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director - NER

Presenters:

Alice Axtell, IR-4 HQ
David Beaudreau; DCLRS
Michael Braverman; IR-4 HQ
Jimmy Byrtus; IR-4 HQ
Debbie Carpenter; IR-4 HQ
Krystal Chojnacki; IR-4 HQ
Christina Dineen; IR-4 HQ
Dirk Drost; MUF

Anna Gore; MUF
Johanna Mazlo; IR-4 HQ
Kimberly Nesci, USDA OPMP
Cristi Palmer; IR-4 HQ
Hannah Ross; IR-4 HQ
Billy Smith; US EPA
Dionne Toombs; USDA NIFA

Tuesday March 5, 2024 9:30 am to 4:30 pm ET

Matt Hengel called the meeting to order at 9:35 am. –

1. Welcome and comments from the current chairs: (Hengel & Scholz)
 - M. Hengel initiated introductions around the room and on zoom.
2. 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 2023, Special Meeting of January 9, 2024, and Special Meeting of January 24, 2024 meetings was made by Liwei Gu, seconded by Todd Scholz; unanimously approved.**
 - A request to add a new agenda item was made by Todd Scholz
 - Preparation for lunch and learn.
3. 2023 IR-4 Year End Summary (Handout)
 - J. Baron presented the statistics from the 2023 Annual Report and Year End Summary document, reporting: that there were 211 New Tolerances for 18 active ingredients that supported 1613 new uses; IR-4 submitted 12 tolerance petition and 2 final reports for a label expansion or conditional registration that covered 92 unique requests; and that 23 data packages were completed but not submitted due to a registrant hold.
 - J. Baron reported that in the EHC program there was 1 new registration that contributed to 500 new crop uses; there were 657 field and greenhouse trials completed that contributed to 57 projects; and the priorities for the EHC Program were established at the Biennial Workshop. For the Performance program J. Baron reported: that there were 134 Product Performance reports and 47 Integrated Solutions reports provided to registrants. J. Baron reported that the Biopesticide program supported 2 new registrations.
 - J. Baron reported on the 2023 research conducted for the Food Program and the 2024 planned research program as a result of the Food Use Workshop.
 - A discussion was held regarding registrants imposing a moratorium on new project submissions to EPA due to concerns about the Endangered Species Act (ESA), PFAS endocrine disrupters, triazoles, and other .

4. CLC Report (Scholz)

- Membership report (Handout + Presentation)
 - T. Scholz provided an update on: the CLC Charter; new CLC membership; reviewed a membership report; and shared the “Track A” members who needed a vote for renewal.
 - **A motion was made to approve the “Track A” Commodity Liaison Committee membership list by Amy Upton; seconded by Zach Bagley; unanimously approved.**
 - M. Bledsoe requested any additional nominations for the Chair and Vic Chair positions, hearing none, he reported that the Election committee nominated Todd Scholz to continue as Chair and Keith Pitts to continue to serve as Vice Chair.
 - **A motion was made to approve Todd Scholz as the Chair and Keith Pitts as the Vice Chair by Mike Bledsoe, seconded by Amy Upton; unanimously approved.**
 - T. Scholz reported on: the challenges of securing increased funding for the IR-4 Project and also ARS; that there may still be hope in the legislature; and shared the Board that was elected with the Friends of IR-4 Program.
- Advocacy Plans
 - D. Beaudreau reported that: there is a delay in wrapping up the Farm Bill; Congressional offices have opened portals to submit FY 2025 requests; the President’s Budget will be released at the State of the Union address; and that this week there are several meeting with Congressional staff and meetings with Senators to make these funding increase requests.
 - A discussion was held regarding it being a tough year to ask for increased funding and what percent of the Farm Bill is allocated to specialty crops (0.5%), how recognition of the IR-4 Project was growing among members of Congress, and that members has increased to 28 members to now also include registrants and individual members.

Break at 10:24 am. The meeting reconvened at 10:37 am. –

5. Priority Setting/New Research

- Debrief from 2023 Priority Setting Workshops and Plans for 2024 (Handout)
 - J. Baron introduced the topic and that he wanted to have an open discussion about our priority setting session.
 - A. Axtell provided an overview of the 2024 Research Plan for Product Performance and the process of getting to the agreed upon priorities; discussed the number of priorities and trials and causes for delays; resource allocations for Performance work. A. Axtell further reported on: Integrated Solutions priorities and trials; current field trial costs
 - A discussion was held regarding CDFA funding and how performance trial allocations come in and how the Product Performance, Integrated Solutions or Biopesticide platforms can help refocus ourselves due to the ESA restrictions and away from synthetics.
 - C. Palmer reported on: the EHC Priority Setting process and annual schedule and components of the priority setting program including agenda, handouts and purpose for biannual schedule; highlighted differences between the EHC and Food Programs; and reviewed research capacity and where researchers are located.

- A discussion was held regarding the attendance of growers at the priority setting as well as trade and extension attendees; and where industry donations are housed.
- Key Dates Associated with 2025 Priority Setting (Handout)
 - A. Axtell shared the important deadlines for the Food Program research cycle including an earlier deadline to submit new project requests for the Food Use Program.
- Trends and Concerns and Rethinking Priority Setting (Handout)
 - J. Baron reported: that there are increasing trends and concerns that warrant discussion by the group including ESA review/Europe; chemical production and restrictions as well as EPA process changes; Biopesticide markets are changing and emerging technologies are on the rise. J. Baron also reported on: the existing workshop process and how engaging it is to stakeholders; the potential to rethink the timing and look at the Canadian model and plan for a year out and prioritizing a pest versus a product.
 - A discussion was held regarding: prioritizing a pest versus a product and how that might alleviate project cancellations or delays; the potential to refine the EPA red light process; the Australian Priority Setting process; support for moving the deadline earlier to submit new project requests; and keeping a week or two weeks between the deadline and the Industry Technology Session.

Lunch and Learn Briefing

- M. Aerts led a discussion to develop final messaging to leave the staffers after the Lunch and Learn.
- A discussion was held regarding: Cost and time to conduct the performance and residue research; thank them all for the support for the level funding; reiterating our asks for FY 25 and the farm bill; key challenges for the specialty crop industry; how additional funding could help address those challenges; the return on investment; and what IR-4 is receiving is not competitive with what other countries are receiving for the same research.

6. Global Minor Use Summit/Minor Use Foundation (Presentation)

- D. Drost announced that Anna Gore has been promoted to Executive Director of the Minor Use Foundation.
- A. Gore presented on: the Minor Use Summit held in Madrid, Spain that had 170 participants from 41 countries; the 2024 Work plan that was determined at the summit; training and capacity building program for the year; and fundraising strategies.

7. USDA Assisting Specialty Crop Exports (ASCE) initiative (Handout)

- J. Baron reported on: the Assisting Specialty Crop Exports (ASCE) grant initiative (\$65,000,000) to support educational initiatives to support food safety systems and requirements (Europe); helping countries adopt international standards; supporting the MRL database; the proposals may be commodity focused versus general specialty crop focused and there may be opportunities for commodities to apply; and that there was one staff person will manage the new program.

Break for lunch at 12:16 pm. The meeting reconvened at 1:20 pm.--

8. Rethinking processes within Biopesticide Regulatory Support (Handout)

- J. Baron reported: on the success of the Biopesticide program and the processes it uses to date and concerns of transparency and tracking; increasing trends in the Biopesticide pest management solutions and difficulty getting data waivers from EPA; efforts to enhance the

Biopesticide tracking database and project vetting process; and how best structure the program.

- A discussion was held regarding with the overlap with EHC Program and how will project be vetted; the program is already providing consulting services; handling confidentiality of companies; using public funds to compete with private consultants; and the registration process for Biopesticides;

9. Enhancement of Training (Handout)

- J. Baron reported: current employee training taking place are from the Training and Education Committee, Regional Field Coordinators, and Quality Assurance Unit; reported on enhanced employee training as a result of the path forward including a new employee orientation, Leadership Development Program, mini sabbaticals, IR-4 developing standardized training, and that the HQ led program would be spearheaded by Rob Welker; and that the IR-4 Laboratories are working to implement a training program as well.

10. Upcoming Meetings (Handout)

- Summer PMC Meeting: July 9-11
- 2024 Food Program Workshop: September 10-12
- Fall PMC/NRPM: October 21-25
- 2025 Joint CLC/PMC Meeting: March 4-6
 - K. Chojnacki shared a brief presentation of the upcoming event dates.

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

11. Partner Updates

- USDA Office of Pest Management and Policy (OPMP)
 - K. Nesci presented on: the staff that comprises the OPMP are mainly made up of former EPA staffers; they make suggestions and offer support for grower needs and try and serve as the voice of the grower about the implications of some of the proposed EPA mitigations; some successes were wind directional buffers, advocating for longer phase-outs of products; working to co-host mitigation workshops for the ESA to develop additional mitigation options; and interface with the states to keep them informed on what is happening.
 - A discussion was held regarding the potential for a staff person from OPMP to participate in reviewing Biopesticide projects and that there is a new office of agriculture and rural affairs at the EPA.
- US EPA – Office of Pesticide Programs
 - B. Smith reported: on the registrations processed from the IR-4 Project in 2023 and three of them negated the need for Section 18 filings; that they appreciated the partnership with the IR-4 Project; discussed challenges such the stoplight analysis growing from three colors because of increased issues, antimicrobial resistance; on a work plan progress and settlement of ESA lawsuit; herbicide strategy was out for public comment and received many comments and a report is expected in August; insecticide strategy is also underway; vulnerable species pilot will be updated later this year and to develop better maps; mitigations need to be practical and enforceable; upcoming meetings to discuss elements of ESA; and are looking forward to continued collaboration with IR-4.
 - A discussion was held regarding distributor selling AGRI-Strep to the growers in FL by August; if there is any more information IR-4 can provide to get new uses through

- (public interest findings and helping develop maps); antimicrobial resistance issues; and implications with greenhouses.
- USDA NIFA (Presentation)
 - D. Toombs, Associate Director for Programs, USDA NIFA reported: congratulated the IR-4 Project on 60 years; reviewed the mission of NIFA; reviewed USDA Priorities and grant program areas; and how NIFA is structured and rebuilding.
 - Pleasantries about the partnership were shared.

The meeting recessed for the evening at 4:45 pm. --

Tuesday March 6, 2024 8:30 am to 5:00 pm ET

Matt Hengel reconvened the meeting at 8:33 am. --

12. Management Reports

- Administrative Advisors
 - D. Buhler reported: that on the mid-term review for NRSP they requested the IR-4 budget to come in at 15% less but the team is working on strategies to request the full allocation;
 - A discussion was held regarding the background of the proposed cut in off the top funding.
 - S. Lommel reported: that he is on the NRSP committee and was a part of the reduction discussion, but he supports the IR-4 getting full funding and are weighing options; that CALS really values hosting IR-4; State salaries continue to be an issue; NC State struggles with 100% off site, out of State workers; the State budget is in good shape and there has been a 7% increase split across 2 years; and that the synergies of locating to NC has been good for the IR-4 program.
 - M. Holyoak reported: that UC Davis switched to a new budgeting and financial system online and there have been delays such as purchasing as a result and that there are budget cuts at the college level.
 - M. Kairo reported: there is a renovation underway on a 1,000 sq. ft. greenhouse to support some IR-4 trials that have heating and cooling; broke ground on a research center with 7,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse that can support IR-4 work; there will be State land grant match from the Governor for extension and research; and that there was a listening session that UMES included IR-4 in to speak about the partnership.
- NIFA Report and other topics
 - R. Goswami reported: due to the continuing resolution the funding has been coming in pieces and the funding is expected to be the same as last year; the awards management team is fully staffed but most are brand new; the IR-4 amendments have been straightened out and the program staff will be more involved in the award management for this award; NIFA is working to continue to get IR-4 as a non-competitive program starting next year; and that NIFA is extremely supporting of IR-4.
 - A discussion was held regarding the proposal needed for a non-competitive program (not much – directed RFA), preparing for the non-competitive format, the need to stay on top of reporting, and let NIFA know if there is anything that is not currently be reported on that would be helpful to communicate when reporting to congress (including underrepresented colleges and universities).
- Regional/ARS Reports
 - NER: S. Zebelo provided a report on 2023 activities including: that they are getting their funding out smoothly to their researchers, subawards, and state liaison

representatives; received funding for ARS for trials and completing those; ordering and distributing sample bags for regions; completed 31 trials, the status of notebooks and quality assurance activities; and thanked the NER team for their work to run the project in the NER.

- SOR: L. Gu provided a report on 2023 activities including: John Davis has been promoted to Director of Experiment Stations; Janine Spies has moved to a different job after 6 years with IR-4 and Kristen is the interim RFC; a recent in-person training on the eFDB that 17 researcher in person; there is an upcoming meeting with the IR-4 program and the College of Agriculture crop protection professionals; lab submitted 14 ASRs last year; staffing set-backs in the lab; QA completed their assigned activities for 2023 but next year HQ will take over auditing the Homestead and Charleston site; and Jerry met with SOR personnel and drove a Uhaul with archive files up to NC from Florida.
 - A discussion was held regarding systems put into place to prevent issues with lab data inconsistencies.
- WR: M. Hengel provided a report on 2023 activities including: the field program has been progressing normally with field data notebooks coming in, but the biggest hurdles are with the financial system, the sponsored programs office processing subawards, and IDC issues; new FRD in New Mexico; QA is continuing to operate well as a team; 13 ASRs were completed by the lab; the lab hosted Borlaug Fellows, FAS visitors, HQ visitors; the lab move for seismic retrofit has been delayed; hosted the 50th Anniversary of ACS Agro-division; and last week there was an EPA inspection in the field and lab with no findings.
- ARS: A. Simmons reported: that the overall status for research is good; two locations are delayed on their 2023 field data books; all field sites have or will participate in eFDB training; and Wapato laboratory updated their SOPs to mirror the UC Davis SOPs and will be visiting the UC Davis lab to exchange knowledge.
 - A discussion was held regarding funding for the ARS labs.
- HQ Report
 - J. Baron reported: that Jimmy Byrtus will be promoted to Study Director; the biology team is working to standardize processes; David Schnatter has transitioned to the regulatory team; HQ QA has taken on auditing 4 new sites from the SOR and Jane Forder continues to QA for the NER and NCR; operations team is continuing to refine their work; archives have mostly been transferred to a new storage site in NC but 3.1% are still missing from former site; increasing problems with requests for test and reference substances from registrants as they want the orders in earlier; contentious meeting with RFCs about eFDB and new training to help reduce concerns about using the eFDB; and HQ is looking into using artificial intelligence to develop predictive models for field trails.
 - A discussion was held regarding digitizing data and the need to keep the files for the life of the registration.

13. Program Reports – Part 1

- Environmental Horticulture (Handout + Presentation)
 - C. Palmer reported: that there were 22 data summaries for 2023; there was one registration last year but delays due to registrants, ESA, etc.; EHC has produced 64,063 crop uses as of February 2024; on outstanding data reports; on funding rate issues for field trials; on the regional funding distribution for EHC trials and average funding per trial; that there is a joint pilot project going on with Canada; and a forthcoming publication.

14. Last minute plans for Congressional Lunch and Learn

- D. Beaudreau briefed the group on the plans for the Lunch and Learn.

The meeting recessed for the Lunch and Learn at 10:32 am. --

11:15 am to 2:00 pm ET

Congressional Lunch and Learn (noon-1:30 PM) – Capitol Building

- Welcome and Introduction of IR-4
 - Mike Aerts, FFVA to MC
 - Jerry Baron, Overview of IR-4
- Speakers representing specialty crops
 - Rachel Roberts, American Mushroom Institute
 - Johnathan Sarager, Western Growers
 - John Walt Boatright, AFBF
 - Amy Upton, MNLA
 - Maggie Elliott, Hops
- IR-4 Current and Future Issues
- Questions and Closing

The meeting reconvened from the Lunch and Learn at 2:15 pm. --

A brief update was provided regarding the success of the Lunch and Learn; the presentation panel was effective and there were approximately 15 staffers in attendance.

15. Program Reports – Part 2

- Biopesticide Regulatory Support/ International Capacity Building (Handout)
 - M. Braverman reported on: opportunities and challenges of altering the current Biopesticide program; EPA submissions made recently on Lepidext/InsterusHz Moths, Citrus Greening, greenhouse cucumber; several projects that are currently under development by the biopesticide team and future projects; and an upcoming meeting with the Biopesticide division of the EPA.
 - M. Braverman provided a report on International Capacity Building including: and STDF projects in Thailand regarding spinetoram on mango, and Kenya regarding Sulfoxaflor on mango; and about the Global Minor Use Summit.
 - A discussion was held regarding sharing incoming project details and the new MUF center in Latin America.
- Communications (Handout)
 - H. Ross reported on: the refreshed logo; updated brand color pallet for an enhanced look and for accessibility for the visually impaired; new team resources developed; new printed materials available; digital updates in social media, newsletter and website; the status of the intranet project; videos planned for 2024; and a publication on the history of IR-4 created by Meister Media.
- Grant Processing (Handout)
 - K. Chojnacki reported on the current status of the NIFA grants, continued issues with the RED system, and that amendments to finally clean up the NIFA grant numbers will be coming out soon from NC State.
 - A discussion was held regarding the changes software systems and grant end dates.
- Technology Team and eFDB (Handout)

- J. Byrtus reported on the status of the technology team, membership, and the potential for using AI.
- J. Byrtus provided an update on the eFDB reporting: there are over 50 eFDB in use; trainings that have taken place and are planned; and that the first notebooks from the pilot are now being reviewed by QC and QA.
- A discussion was held regarding if an electronic signature is available.
- Food Program (Handout)
 - Residue Research – Field Program/Capacity & Submissions: D. Carpenter reported: this has been a successful year with 18 actions resulting in 1,613 new uses and 213 tolerances; there were 12 new submissions in 2023; the crop grouping initiative updates; a comparison of the field research program in 2023 and 2024 and over the past 10 years; the status of the Field Data Notebooks received at HQ and outstanding 2024 notebooks; and reviewed regulatory challenges.
 - A discussion was held regarding the cause of delays for submissions and if EPA is still allowing super crop groups.
 - Residue Research – Laboratory: D. Carpenter 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.

Break at 3:45 pm. The meeting reconvened at 3:59 pm. –

- Quality Assurance (Handout)
 - J. Mazlo reported on: EPA compliance monitoring; QA preparation activities for the eFDB; additional areas that QA HQ has picked up or assisting with; the implementation of a shared drive; the national QA group is meeting regularly; reviewed 2023 audit inspection data and a comparison from 2021-2023; and provided an update on eQA and eDoc.
- Education & Training Committee (Handout)
 - C. Dineen reported on: the status of selecting the location for the next NEC; planning underway for content of the training; the national SOPs committee and work underway thus far including working toward incorporating them into eQA; update on revising the magnitude of residue protocol template; quarterly virtual trainings; and IR-4 Advisory updates.

16. Food Program Capacity

- J. Baron reported: on an idea to coordinate hiring among the national program and discuss capacity issues such as if FRDs have vacated their role.

17. Other topics/Adjourn

- J. Baron reported that the house approved the budget.

A motion to adjourn the regular session at 4:44 pm and to move to Executive Session was made by Alvin Simmons; seconded by Todd Scholz; unanimously approved.

The meeting recessed for the evening at 4:44 pm.--

Thursday March 9, 2023 - 8:30 am to 11:30 am ET

Matt Hengel convened the Executive Session at 8:30 am. --

18. Executive Session

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

The members reconvened from Executive Session at 11:22 am with the following motions or actions out of Executive Session:

- **Action Item (Baron/Braverman): The Biopesticide Regulatory Support Program will establish an enhanced vetting process for projects and an enhanced database tracking system to present and demonstrate both to the PMC at the Summer Meeting.**

19. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 am by Alvin Simons seconded by Jerry Baron; unanimously approved.