

**United States Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Marketing Service
Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee
Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC
March 10-11, 2015**

Minutes

This summary of the March 10-11, 2015, meeting requires approval by the full United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (Committee). A number of presenters at the meeting used Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat slides to convey information; the slides will be made available for viewing at www.ams.usda.gov/fv.

Attendees:

Virginia Barnes, Barnes Farm, LLP; **Tiffany Boaldin**, Golden Eagle Casino/Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas; **Ben Burkett**, B&B Farm; **Carlos Castaneda**, Castaneda & Sons, Inc.; **Helen Dietrich**, Ridgeview Orchards; **Kristine Ellor**, Phillips Mushroom Farms; **Richard Ha**, Hamakua Springs Country Farms; **Richard Hanas**, A. Duda and Sons, Inc.; **James Johnson**, Carzalia Valley Produce; **Beth Knorr**, Cuyahuga Valley Countryside Conservancy; **Vaughn Koligian**, SunMaid Growers of CA; **Lorri Koster**, Mann Packing Company; **Ricke Kress**, Southern Gardens Citrus; **Roland McReynolds**, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association; **Paul Newman**, Oneonta Star Ranch; **Robert Nolan**, Deer Run Farms; **Dianne Nury**, Vie-Del Company; **Christopher Puentes**, Interfresh, Inc.; **Brent Roggie**, National Grape Cooperative Association; **Diane Smith**, Michigan Apple Committee; **Jorge Vasquez**, Latin Specialties, LLC; **Jin Ju Wilder**, Valley Produce; **Thomas Williams**, SpartanNash; **David Yanda**, Lakeside Foods, Inc.; **Charles Parrott**, Committee Manager; and **Pamela Stanziani**, Designated Federal Official (DFO), Agricultural Marketing Service

Absentees: Catherine Burns, Produce Marketing Association
James Johnson, Carzalia Valley Farms
Diane Smith, Michigan Apple Committee

Presenters and Subject Matter Experts:

Anne L. Alonzo, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Administrator
Samir Assar - FDA
Melissa Bailey – AMS
Linda Calvin – USDA Economic Research Service
Thomas Chandler – non-profit food recovery organization
Michael Durando – AMS
Shareefah Jackson – USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS)
Tom Karst – *The Packer* publication
John Lund – AMS
Brian McGregor – AMS
Ken Petersen – AMS
Fazila Shakir, FDA

Leanne Skelton – USDA AMS; U. S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Liaison
Jennifer Thomas – FDA
Suzanne Thornsbury – USDA Office of the Secretary
Cindy Walters – USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Nathaniel Warenski, NASS

Minutes

This was the Committee's second meeting after the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued it a new two-year charter in July 2013, and appointed new members in July 2014. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) convened the meeting in Room 107A, in the Jamie L. Whitten Building, USDA, Washington, DC.

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

At 8:30 a.m., the Committee Chair, Paul Newman, called the meeting to order. Mr. Parrott welcomed everyone, and again introduced AMS Administrator Anne Alonzo.

Remarks from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service

The AMS Administrator, Anne Alonzo provided a welcome to the Committee and started her remarks by highlighting that AMS will focus its efforts toward implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill and enhancing core services and programs to assist producers, traders, and consumers of American agricultural products. Administrator Alonzo mentioned the budget hearings, the growing number of women in agriculture, the need for encouraging a new generation of farmers, and grants and other programs of AMS. She also discussed the key priorities of AMS and the importance of trade to the fruit and vegetable industry. She mentioned she was working across USDA and with other agencies to help the industry market their goods globally. AMS must find more effective ways to communicate and market the vital work it does. This will enable the agency to attract and collaborate with new strategic partners and to expand our alliances with domestic and international organizations.

Chair Newman took official Committee roll call, reviewed the two-day agenda with the Committee, and asked each member to introduce themselves. After roll call, the draft minutes from the previous meeting (held on September 29-30, 2015) were reviewed by the Committee, noted corrections, and were voted into record with noted changes.

Mr. Parrott introduced the first speaker, Mr. Samir Assar, Ph.D., of the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Mr. Samir, along with Jennifer Thomas, Fazila Shakir, and AMS' Leanne Skelton, provided an update to the implementation of the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) guidelines, how FDA has structured and is phasing in the effort both internally and with regard to rule development, implementation, stakeholder engagement, and industry education. Following that presentation, AMS' Mr. Ken Peterson provided an overview of the status of audit harmonization, the good agricultural practices program, and GFSI recognition. Several members asked questions of the presenters, most significantly regarding the inclusion of cooperative extensions

with FSMA rule implementation, USDA being accepted as a certification body, and /or coordinating with the GFSI scheme, and how the GAPs program is promoted among the organic community.

The Committee took a 30 minute recess

Mr. Parrott introduced Mr. John Lund of AMS who spoke to the Committee about the different USDA labels, what they are used for, and what the criteria is to use each one. He indicated that AMS is reviewing all the labels, which ones are overlapping, and revamping them all eliminating the outdated ones. Questions were raised specifically about USDA having a label for quality and officially indicated for “approved products” under USDA unrelated to any issue of food safety, and how the Quality Monitoring Program and the Quality Through Verification work.

Mr. Parrott introduced the next presenter, Ms. Shareefah Jackson of NASS, along with Ms. Suzanne Thornsbury of ERS, were partnering together to look at (survey) and document food safety practices in the produce industry that are currently in place, versus what will be implemented as a result of FSMA.

The Committee recessed at 11:13 a.m. for a one hour lunch period.

At 1:04 p.m., the meeting resumed with Chair Newman calling the meeting to order, and checked to ensure all members were back including those on teleconference. At this time, Mr. Parrott introduced Mr. Mike Durando, who provided an overview of the ITDS system, which is the International Trade Data System and the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE). Mr. Durando and Mr. Lower of AMS, and Ms. Walters (of APHIS) explained what ITDS does, which replaces multiple paper filings that a business may have with, potentially, multiple government entities, with a web-based, single-window concept. (ITDS is the name of the project, International Trade Data System, and ACE, is the actual software and IT infrastructure and the program that's being run to handle all of this data.) In February 2014, the President issued an Executive Order that mandates this whole program (ACE and ITDS) to be up and running and fully deployed by December of 2016. By November, all electronic cargo release and related entry summary filings, which is all the additional information that goes on top of the manifest, must be electronically filed through the ACE. Agencies involved include FDA, USDA and the Customs and Border Protection agency under the Department of Homeland Security.

At the conclusion of all presentations, Chair Newman asked for reports from each of the Working Group chairs/vice chairs. Food Safety Working Group vice chair Lorri Koster reported that the group was still working on drafting position statements and a recommendation related to the need for audit harmonization. The group noted three key points: audit fatigue and the need for harmonization, a reduction in liability for all businesses in compliance, and that the USDA should be the gold standard and why was GFSI not endorsing USDA as the standard. Mr. Petersen addressed the GFSI scheme and requirements, and explained that GFSI wants each entity that is managing the scheme, the standard and the audit process, to just do that, that is their sole responsibility, and they're

essentially the keeper of the standard and the process. ISO has very clear roles and responsibilities for accreditation bodies and certification bodies. Based on international ISO standards, the scheme, working with an accreditation body, accredits certification bodies to go out and actually apply and perform the audits. The process is to be a completely transparent because they don't want the fox guarding the henhouse; if somebody owns the standard also audits to the standard, there's an integrity issue. From ISO's perspective, they want these to be separate as part of the process so that the scheme owner has some control over the certification body, making sure that they're interpreting the standard correctly, doing the audit work properly, and providing oversight, ensuring the certification body is applying the standard, and issuing certification to individual entities or farms.

Member Ricke Kress asked if any of the observers in the room had any comments and wanted to know if they would all introduce themselves. Mr. Newman agreed. The observers around the room all introduced themselves, their affiliations, and their interest in the Committee.

Chair Newman asked if there were any further questions. Member Vasquez brought up the inspections at ports of entry and potential changes that could be made as well as Member Koster, and Member Wilder mentioned testing laboratories and updated technologies.

Chair Newman asked Member Koligian to report on the issue of transportation infrastructure at the ports. Mr. Koligian reviewed the fact that U.S. ports do not have the capacity that is needed for increased import/export activities, especially as compared to other countries, and that the US will lose out if there isn't any expansion. The issue regarding the backlog at the west coast ports due to the labor strike, and the damage and spoilage of perishable goods (produce) was brought up. Discussion included timing of the issue, short term fixes, and the implications on what would occur if something wasn't done to speed up the backlog process. It was determined that the members would draft a recommendation to address that issue to be sent to the Secretary.

The Committee recessed for 20 minutes.

Chair Newman reconvened the meeting and asked if there were any observer comments which there were none. He then asked the Agricultural Labor Working Group for their presentation. WG Chair Castaneda and Member Kress provided a presentation of the state of agricultural labor in the U.S., the H2-A program, and actions that have been taken by organizations working to solve the issues. It was determined that the recommendation would need additional information and the group would convene outside of the Committee meeting with oversight from Ms. Stanziani and Mr. Parrott, to draft the additional input, and send to Ms. Stanziani's laptop to present on Day 2 of the meeting, along with the west coast port delay's issue recommendation.

DFO Stanziani and Chair Newman reviewed the recommendation drafting process again with the group as well as other administrative matters.

The Committee adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m. for the day

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

At 8:28 a.m., Chair Newman called the meeting to order.

Chair Newman noted that there was to be an amendment drafted to the Agricultural Labor Working Group's recommendations, and that Mr. Brian McGregor of the AMS Transportation and Marketing Program would provide an update on the west coast port delays situation. At this time, Chair Newman asked all observers to introduce themselves and ask any questions or make any comments to the Committee at this time.

Chair Newman asked Research and Grants Working Group chair Jin Ju Wilder to make the group's presentation and introduce their recommendation drafts. She deferred to Member McReynolds who made a presentation on plant breeding and funding. After the presentation, DFO Stanziani reminded all members that a draft of all the working group recommendations was provided for them in their meeting folders. After discussion and review, the recommendation was voted on (motions made by Member Kress and seconded by Member Barnes) and approved unanimously by the full Committee. (Copies of all final recommendations are included as an attachment to these meeting minutes.)

Mr. Parrott introduced Mr. McGregor, who provided the Committee with an overview and update on the west coast port delays.

After Mr. McGregor's presentation, Member Kress made a presentation on pest detection and disease prevention programs and provided a draft recommendation #2 from the working group. After discussion and review, the recommendation was voted on (motions made by Member Kress and seconded by Member Wilder) and approved unanimously by the full Committee.

Chair Newman asked Education and Branding Working Group (WG) Chair Brent Roggie to make the group's presentation and introduce their recommendation drafts. He presented the first recommendation on asking the USDA to continue to expand the efforts to make Food and Nutrition Services healthy eating resources more widely known by the public to increase use and, thus, consumption of fruits and vegetables by youth. After discussion and review, the issue was tabled for further information to be provided. WG Chair Roggie introduced the working group's second recommendation on genetically engineered food labeling. The Committee discussed and reviewed the issue and recommendation, recommending the final version that the prompt creation of a uniform national labeling standard for genetically-engineered products. Further, the Committee strongly believes the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is the appropriate agency to oversee and develop the national labeling standard. The recommendation was voted on (motions made by Member Puentes and seconded by Member Wilder) and approved with majority with one abstention.

The Committee recessed for 15 minutes at 10:34 a.m.

Chair Newman reconvened the meeting asking Member Koligian to further discuss his findings on the drought and infrastructure, who indicated that the issue of infrastructure was too large and it may be a better issue for a larger working group, rather than just one person to research. Additionally he indicated that the drought issue would have to be undertaken on a state by state basis given the issue is more regional than national.

Chair Newman then asked the Agricultural Labor Working Group for their amendments. Agricultural Labor Working Group (WG) Chair Castaneda provided an update to the recommendation made earlier, adding that the passage of a national immigration reform program is of critical importance, and until such reform is implemented, we support and request that USDA become more involved in the H2A guest worker program and become the direct advocate for the program to the U.S. agricultural industry. A motion made by WG Chair Castaneda, and seconded by Member Barnes, and was passed unanimously.

Member Koligian provided language for the west coast port delay recommendation, which was presented, reviewed and discussed. A final vote was made on the revised draft (providing a solution to the backlog issue, and having the Secretary making this a priority). Motion was made on the recommendation by Member Kress and seconded by Member Koligian, and was passed unanimously.

The Committee then readdressed the Education and Branding Working Group on making school nutrition resources more widely available. It was agreed to add in the word “promotional” to the recommendation so it states “promotional efforts be undertaken to make these resources more widely known.” A motion on the recommendation was made Member Puentes and seconded by Committee Vice-Chair Knorr, and was passed unanimously.

Chair Newman called on Research and Grant Funding Working Group (WG) Chair Wilder to review the new recommendation drafted by her working group in conjunction with the Education and Branding Working Group (Member Boaldin). The recommendation is to make a supporting statement saying that the Committee appreciates and supports Secretary Vilsack's steadfast commitment to our children's health through the new school breakfast and lunch programs and put forth four recommendations. The first recommendation is to maintain those current new standards. The second recommendation is to continue to educate the stakeholders, namely the school food authorities, on the importance of those standards to our children's health and learning. The third is to increase the federal fruit and vegetable reimbursements to ensure that the school food authorities can afford to meet the federal requirements. The fourth recommendation is the Committee urges the Secretary to work more closely with the State Departments of Agriculture on this issue, because it's the State Departments of Agriculture that really work with the school food authorities on these programs. A motion to pass these recommendations was made by Member Hanas, and seconded by Member Williams, and passed unanimously.

Chair Newman asked if there were any further topics and areas that the group would like to research, either as existing working groups, or as new ones. Several suggestions were made and it was determined that this would be decided at the next meeting in September, but members are to continue to meeting and review new topics until that time.

Chair Newman recognized an observer, Reverend Thomas Chandler, who asked to speak and present information about his organization that collects produce to fight hunger for the poor and wanted to broaden their connection with the industry.

Chair Newman then asked for any observer comments of which there were none. He then asked about setting a date for the next meeting to the Committee and to DFO Stanziani. It was decided that DFO Stanziani would do some research into meeting in mid-September and send the options out to the Committee via email to decide on a final date. DFO Stanziani then addressed final administrative matters with the Committee.

Chair Newman made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Member Yanda.

The full Committee meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.

Pamela S. Stanziani
Designated Federal Officer, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
March 11, 2015