

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
NUTRITION RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Tuesday, November 7, 2023, 10:00am PT  
3001 Douglas Blvd, First Fl Conference Rm, Roseville

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Nutrition Research Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Dan Bozzo  
Tony Gerst  
Sandra Mitchell  
Katelyn Salzburger  
Joe Turkovich  
David Wohletz

**Members Absent:**

None

**Guests:**

Jasmine Dawson, Andrea N. Giancoli, Kiaran Locy, Becky Poland, Jared Ruggles, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Gerst, Chair of the Nutrition Research Committee called the meeting to order at 10:04am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS / DESIRED OUTCOMES OF MEETING**

Mr. Zea commented on the preparations made for this meeting, noting that the topics were very nuanced and complicated for the Committee -- he extended his appreciation for the time they gave to studying the pre-reads and attending the meeting. Mr. Zea also gave credit to Ms. Giancoli for the work she had done in order to make this meeting successful.

Mr. Gerst told the members that many of the issues had been winnowed down, but that there would still be a lot to accomplish at today's meeting, with a few decisions to be made, including some financial ones.

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**3. CURRENT PROJECTS UPDATE**

- Follow-up Q&A – Ms. Giancoli asked if there were any follow up questions to the [Quarterly Report](#) received by the members as a pre-read. Some clarification was provided regarding Dr. De Souza papers that were rejected by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Ms. Giancoli assured the members that this response was not unusual and that, in the world of publishing research, sometimes it required shopping several journals before finding the right one to publish a particular research paper.
- Ms. Giancoli moved to Dr. Le May's study on the "Identification of Datasets for Analysis of the Contribution of Prune Consumption to Bone Health" noting that the two outcomes realized from this study were: 1) the researchers found no positive association with prunes and bones, and 2) they couldn't find enough prune consumers to have enough power for a statistical analysis.

**By a unanimous vote, the committee recommended to the Board to terminate this study and cancel phase 2.**

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#### 4. NUTRITION BUDGET

- 2022/23 Budget

Study (\$k)	FY22/23
Fecal Transplant/McCabe	\$30
Manuscripts & Presentations/De Souza	\$65
Food Survey Audit/Lemay	\$42
EU Health Claim	\$6
Japan Clinical Trial Advisement/De Souza	\$5
Manuscript: Colon Cancer Protection/Turner	\$5
Mitigate Hormonal Contraceptives/ Hooshmand & Kern	\$40
Postmenopausal Women in Korea/Clifton & Kim	\$(20)
Sample Packs/Other	\$2
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$175</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$546</b>
<b>Unspent Budget</b>	<b>\$371</b>

The 2022/23 budget is underspent by \$371k due to delays in getting a clinical trial started in Japan. Additionally, a payment of \$50k was due on the Korean study, however the Board received a net inflow of funds totaling \$20k due to underspending on the part of the researchers. Lastly, two projects that received no-cost extensions pushed their final payments into future years' budgets.

- 4-Year Budget Forecast

Study (\$K)	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY26/27	FY27/28	Total \$1MM over 5 years
Japan Clinical Trial (Placeholder)	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	
Prebiotic/Biobank/De Souza (Placeholder)	\$100	\$100	\$100	--	
Calcium Utilization Study (Placeholder)	\$75	\$75	\$75	--	
Mitigate Hormonal Contraceptives/ Hooshmand & Kern	\$73	--	--	--	
Manuscripts & Presentations/De Souza	\$37	--	--	--	
Manuscript: Colon Cancer Protection/Turner	\$13	--	--	--	
Food Survey Audit/Lemay	\$14	--	--	--	
Fecal Transplant/McCabe	--	\$48	--	--	
Prevention of Glucocorticoid Induced Osteoporosis/ McCabe	--	\$25	--	--	
Sample Packs/Other	\$22	\$20	\$20	\$20	
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$534</b>	<b>\$468</b>	<b>\$395</b>	<b>\$220</b>	
Budget Guidance for Committee Planning	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	
Rollover Budget from 22/23*	\$371				
<b>Cumulative Unspent Budget</b>	<b>\$237</b>	<b>\$169</b>	<b>\$174</b>	<b>\$354</b>	
Covered by rolling 3 year "Agreement in Principle"					

Mr. Ruggles reviewed the 4-year budget forecast that included three placeholder projects that had been approved but had not yet had contracts written for them. He confirmed that these were approved and that the spending was scheduled to take place. Mr. Ruggles pointed to the cumulative unspent budget identified on the bottom line and noted that without the Japan study there would be an additional \$200k per year added to those unspent budget figures, as noted below:

Study (\$K)	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY26/27	FY27/28
Japan Clinical Trial (Placeholder)	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
Prebiotic/Biobank/De Souza (Placeholder)	\$100	\$100	\$100	--
Calcium Utilization Study (Placeholder)	\$75	\$75	\$75	--
Mitigate Hormonal Contraceptives/ Hooshmand & Kern	\$73	--	--	--
Manuscripts & Presentations/De Souza	\$37	--	--	--
Manuscript: Colon Cancer Protection/Turner	\$13	--	--	--
Food Survey Audit/Lemay	\$14	--	--	--
Fecal Transplant/McCabe	--	\$48	--	--
Prevention of Glucocorticoid Induced Osteoporosis/ McCabe	--	\$25	--	--
Sample Packs/Other	\$22	\$20	\$20	\$20
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$334</b>	<b>\$268</b>	<b>\$195</b>	<b>\$20</b>
Budget Guidance for Committee Planning	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
Rollover Budget from 22/23*	\$371			
Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$437	\$569	\$774	\$1,154
Covered by rolling 3 year "Agreement in Principle"				

Total \$1MM over 5 years

## 5. APPROVED PENDING PROJECTS UPDATE

As a recap, Ms. Giancoli reminded the group that in March 2023 the NAP recommended the following, with the committee agreeing to move forward with recommendations 2 & 5:

1. Replicate, repeat and extend (cardiometabolic measurements)!
  - e.g., Osteopenic men – wait for Arjmandi men’s study results
  - Wait for De Souza bone strength outcomes (pQCT)
2. **Study how prunes affect calcium absorption, retention and bone formation**
3. Look at gut barrier and prebiotic activity
  - Await Dr. McCabe glucocorticoid and fecal transplant study results
4. Consider preclinical fracture study to study rate of healing
5. **Gut-Bone Recommendation #3:**
  - *Conduct short-term clinical feeding trial to investigate any presence of a prebiotic prune-positive effect on gut inflammation and bone biomarkers*

The discussion then turned to the pending projects update:

- Prune Effect on Calcium Utilization Proposal – NAP Evaluation and Next Steps – Ms. Giancoli noted that this proposal was rewritten to fit Dr. Connie Weaver into the project. This will have to go back to the NAP for their final recommendation.
- Japan Clinical Trial Status – Dr. De Souza reviewed two proposals that had been received and her final recommendation was that a bone expert was needed to serve as Principal Investigator, however neither of the proposals received had included this. Dr. De Souza could continue to do outreach but her fees would need to be negotiated down to \$3500. Additionally, the clinical research organization would charge \$6-8k, so total costs for these efforts would range from \$15-20k.

The Committee unanimously agreed to move forward and spend up to \$20k in order to further investigate (through Dr. De Souza and the CRO) the possibility of this trial coming to fruition. The findings would be brought back to the NAP to deliberate over and the results would be delivered in time for the March 2024 Nutrition Research Committee meeting.

- Prebiotic/Inflammation/Bone/Biobank (De Souza and Rogers) was greenlighted at the March meeting, but the NAP questioned why an RFP was being issued when all of the samples already existed in the biobank. Subsequently a proposal was sent to the NAP for review and this project is now moving forward. Mr. Gerst noted that use of the biobank would provide significant savings in this study.

## 6. NEW RESEARCH PROJECT DISCUSSION

- Ms. Giancoli showed the progress to-date that had been made on the Nutrition Research Roadmap:

NRR Recommendation	Research Completed/Underway/Pending/Proposed
1. Conduct clinical bone health studies of unexplored life stages, demographics and other bone health-related conditions	Hooshmand: Young women 18-25 y.o. on hormonal contraceptives - underway
	Arjmandi: Men's study (USDA funded) - completed
	De Souza/Rogers: Proposed trans/perimenopause women 47-54 y.o. prevention study – consider as a new research project
2. Conduct international clinical research	Clifton/Kim: South Korea PM women - completed
	Pending Japan study
3. Utilize epidemiology and other surveys to aid discovery	Lemay: Evaluating food frequency datasets audit - completed
4. Confirm prune effect on bone separate from calcium, vitamin D and dairy	NAP - recommendation unnecessary, dairy & prunes ought to be additive; NAP instead recommended to conduct the calcium utilization/kinetics study - Cao proposal under NAP review
5. Conduct clinical investigation to establish prunes as a food-based solution during a needed “drug holiday”	NAP - lower priority and likely unnecessary as, in effect, has already been done with the current clinical research
6. Conduct a glucocorticoid clinical trial	Wait for McCabe results before considering as a new research project
7. Evaluate the body of evidence via systematic reviews/meta-analysis	NAP need at least 7 completed and published to warrant a literature review of the prune-bone body of evidence

- A discussion was held regarding the NAP’s list of all future research recommendations.  
Focus Area One – Expand the Evidence about Prunes and Healthy Bones: *Addressing the gaps from the current body of evidence:*
  1. Conduct clinical bone health studies of unexplored life stages, demographics and other bone health-related conditions
  2. Conduct international clinical research
  3. Utilize epidemiology and other surveys to aid discovery
  4. Confirm prune effect on bone separate from calcium, vitamin D and dairy
  5. Conduct clinical investigation to establish prunes as a food-based solution during a needed “drug holiday”
  6. Conduct a glucocorticoid clinical trial
  7. Evaluate the body of evidence via systematic reviews/meta-analysis

Focus Area Two – Identify a Gateway to the Gut-Bone Axis: *Investigate California Prunes’ prebiotic and anti-inflammatory activity*

1. Conduct in vitro fecal fermentation studies
2. Conduct preclinical feeding studies as initial in vitro outcomes indicate
3. Conduct short-term clinical feeding trial to investigate any presence of a prebiotic prune-positive effect on gut inflammation and bone biomarkers
4. Conduct a larger sample and longer duration clinical feeding trial to measure bone health outcomes over time

Ms. Giancoli summarized the suggestions made by the group and created a short list for the extension of the roadmap. Suggestions that rose to the top included: **An on/off time course prune intervention; a Hispanic population study; and a trans/perimenopause study.** These would be further developed and ready to present at the March 2024 Nutrition Research Committee meeting.

Mr. Zea suggested the possibility of another NAP offsite in the fall of 2024.

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**7. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the California Prune Board Nutrition Research Committee adjourned at 12:24pm PT.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donn Zea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the "D" and a distinct "Z" and "ea" at the end.

Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
EXPORT COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Thursday, November 9, 2023, 9:00am PT  
California Farm Bureau, 2600 River Plaza Drive, Sacramento

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Export Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Bob Amarel  
Jaswant Bains  
Junko Fuwa  
John Friend  
Jeff McLemore  
Sandra Mitchell  
Rishi Raj  
Brad Schuler  
Steve Sousa

**Members Absent:**

Sekul Spaich

**Guests:**

Maxine Broderick, Alison Burns, Jazmine Dawson, Ginger Holzkecht, Julie Jenkins, Kiaran Locy, Becky Poland, Esther Ritson-Elliott, Jared Ruggles, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Steve Sousa, Chair of the Export Committee called the meeting to order at 9:07am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS / CHAIR COMMENTS**

Chair Sousa reminded the members that there were extensive amounts of information sent out in pre-reads and that there much to share and discuss at today's meeting.

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**3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Mr. Zea acknowledged the diligence of the staff and the level of analysis that takes place in preparation for these meetings. The staff are constantly determining what level of detailed information Committee members would like to see in order to make these meetings successful. Today we will look at analytics, economic headwinds, and the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP). We will work hard to provide you with the information and answers that you need in order to make the conversations and deliberations in this meeting productive and meaningful.

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**4. EXPORT MARKETS OVERVIEW**

- Export Markets Data Review/Performance 2022/23 – For the purposes of this discussion, Ms. Burns began by clarifying some of the terms to be utilized today.

*Volume: All figures are rounded to the nearest metric ton. There is no information available in FAS or TDM to determine size of nature/condition of the product.*

**Value:**

*Imports: Unless otherwise stated value is defined by Cost, Insurance and Freight Import Value (CIF): The value of the merchandise upon reaching the port of import; includes insurance and freight.*

*Exports: Unless otherwise stated this is defined by Free On Board (FOB): The value of the merchandise upon being loaded onto the exporting ship. This value includes all costs associated with delivery from the manufacturer to the exporting ship/port but excludes freight, insurance and other fees involved when the carrier leaves the port.*

**3-year Average:** *The average volume and value across the 3 crop years before 2021/22; this allows us to fairly judge current performance given 2021/22 high U.S. export volumes during the short crop from Chile, Argentina and France.*

**Average value per metric ton:** *Total value divided by total volume; this measure is used to understand: i) the average value return per metric ton of U.S. prunes compared to other countries of origin, ii) whether there is any inflation/deflation in the value of the product that is contributing to TOTAL value, and iii) what the average spend per market is on ALL dried prunes.*

Trended Average Value per MT - In the last five years, the California Prune premium continued to retain value over low-pricing from key competitors. 2022/23 saw California Prunes achieve a 21% premium over Chile, 13% over France and 122% over Argentina.

U.S. Global Exports 2022/23: Total Volume and Value – While export volume was down, export value realigned to the 3-year average. The five focus markets (Japan, China & Hong Kong, Canada, Italy and the United Kingdom) account for 54% of volume.

Japan remains the highest value single export market for U.S. prunes, accounting for 25% of the value of 2022/23 exports. Mexico retains second position and the remaining 8 of the top 10 U.S. export markets follow in this order: Canada, China/Hong Kong, Italy, Germany, South Korea, Netherlands, Israel and Poland.

By volume, Japan continues to be the largest market for U.S. prunes as well, accounting for 22% of global U.S. exports. China/Hong Kong and Mexico retain 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> positions and the remaining 7 of the top ten follow in this order: Canada, Germany, Italy, South Korea, Netherlands, Poland and Israel.

Lastly, the U.S. average value per MT of global exports has risen by 21% over the last five years. This has been driven by CPB's 5 MAP focus markets which accounted for 54% of global export value this year.

- **Key Program Updates in Export Markets for 2023/24**

Japan - continues to be the number one export market in both volume and value, maintaining over 90% of market share. The "Let's Pukatsu" campaign will continue to be utilized across all target groups. Additionally, TV will be supported with a TV commercial digital campaign and free TV publicity, and there will be in-store support with POS for shelving and display.

Italy – The partnership between CPB and Master Chocolatier, Stefano Collomb who has participated in a campaign specific to the Italian market, showcased California Prunes, supported our premium positioned and generated interest on social media. Stefano has also produced a special Easter egg for this year. Italy will also be working with three top Italian athletes as the Paris Olympics draw closer, and there will be a virtual event held in California in 2023/24 as well.

South Korea – California Prunes returned to South Korea this year and an event at a prestigious Seoul club helped to showcase California Prunes with a California Prune-inspired lunch. This event created interest/coverage for trade media, provided valuable trade information and support for our premium price positioning. Other opportunities include a Trade and Consumer PR service, an SNS campaign on Instagram and Facebook, an influencer program using the Mom café community forum, and holding a booth at the Seoul Food & Hotel Show in June.

China – CPB’s presence in China has been restricted to an intel-only role for 2023/24, specifically to watch production and success of orchards in the Xinjiang area, which accounts for 87% of China’s fresh plum acreage. It is currently anticipated that 15-20% of their fresh plum harvest will be used for prunes over the next five years. For 2023/24, this activity will continue to be studied.

- Headwinds – Industry Discussion

Globally, the U.S. saw exports of all consumables, food and fresh/processed fruit & tree nuts in decline in 2023 compared to 2022. It has been a challenging year and the behavior of consumers continues to be impacted by the ongoing cost-of-living increases, contributing to a difficult year in general for U.S. exports, especially in consumer-oriented products.

Japan in particular had challenges as their economic situation has been the reverse of the U.S., making their export market quite prosperous, but their import market weaker. Italy has had some high inflation, so exports to Italy were down 23%. Inflation has even been reflected this year in the cost of freight containers.

As an FYI to the committee, more competition has been noticed this year in the less traditional markets of Uzbekistan, Moldova, Iran and Serbia is providing.

With the impact of Covid, economies, geopolitics, and all that has happened over the last few years, a discussion took place around the continuance of the current CPB Export strategy (i.e., to focus on 3-4 markets). Alternately, should the Board pivot its strategy?

After a healthy discussion and substantial input from members, this group agreed that the current strategy should continue in the current markets, but that further discussions could be held at the March 2024 Export Committee meeting as well. It was noted that the addition of Mexico to those priority markets would be address through EMP funds.

- New Funding – Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) – Ms. Ritson-Elliott introduced this new funding opportunity at today’s meeting, anticipating that applications will likely be due prior to the March 2024 Export Committee meeting.

Mr. Zea introduced the RAPP program, noting that more details would be rolled out over the next 6 to 8 weeks. With \$1.2B in Ag promotion and \$100k available for technical assistance, this could be a \$1.3B program which would “enable exporters to break into new markets and increase market share in growth markets.” Countries/regions likely to be eligible for funding include: Central America; South America; Middle East; Africa; South Asia; and Southeast Asia. The estimated timeline is as follows:

- Mid-November 2023 – FAS publishes program in Federal Register
- Mid-January 2024 – Applications will be due with FAS
- April 2024 – Funding decisions will be announced
- The first tranche of funding (\$300M) would be spent over the 20-month period between May 2024 and December 2025



- The other opportunity that will soon be available is \$1B in commodity purchases, which will be used to address food insecurity in other countries, in the form of international food aid. More details will be released soon on this program as well.

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**5. OTHER BUSINESS**

When a question was posed regarding the status of the industry's ingredients program, Mr. Zea indicated that this discussion was currently taking place at the Executive Committee level.

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**6. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the California Prune Board Export Committee adjourned at 10:42am PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Thursday, November 30, 2023, 10:00am PT  
CPB Offices, 3017 Douglas Blvd, Suite 280, Roseville, CA 95661

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Executive Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Jaswant Bains  
Dan Bozzo  
Brendon Flynn  
Sandra Mitchell  
Ranvir Singh  
George Sousa, Jr.  
Joe Turkovich

**Members Absent:**

Dane Lance

**Guests:**

Jazmine Dawson, Steve Donaldson, Ginger Holz knecht, Kiaran Locy, Becky Poland, Esther Ritson-Elliott, Jared Ruggles, Brad Schuler, Greg Thompson, Mike Vereschagin, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. George Sousa, Jr., Chair of the California Prune Board Executive Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:02am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS/CHAIR COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the public or the Chair.

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**3. USDA REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROMOTION PROGRAM (RAPP)**

Ms. Ritson-Elliott confirmed that on October 23<sup>rd</sup> the USDA announced \$2.3B in funding which will be made available through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). Of that amount, \$1B is identified in commodity purchases (export only) for international food aid to address global hunger with \$100M earmarked for specialty crops. The largest amount of funding will be provided to the new Regional Agricultural Promotions Program (RAPP), with the first tranche set at \$300M. This program is intended to enable exporters to break into new markets and increase market share in growth markets. Those countries/regions that will be ineligible for funding include Canada, EU-27, Mexico and China (including Hong Kong and Macau). There will be special emphasis placed on Africa, Latin American/Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian regions.

The timeline for this first tranche of funding is as follows:

- November 17, 2023: RAPP rules published on Federal Register
- November 29, 2023: NOFO (Notice of Funding) published
- February 2, 2024: Applications due to FAS
- April/May 2024: Funding decisions will be announced
- June 2024 – September 2029: First tranche of funding (\$300M) will be awarded

Ms. Ritson-Elliott also reported out on the Export Committee meeting that was held on November 9, 2023, where export data for 2022/23 and key program highlights for 2023/24 were discussed, along with headwinds over the last few years (Covid, geopolitical issues, global inflation, shipping, to name a few.) The Export Committee remains supportive of the current focus strategy and markets but agreed to look for opportunities with which to take advantage of RAPP monies.

Current Key MAP markets: Japan, Canada, Italy, UK and South Korea

Current EMP market: Mexico

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#### 4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

- Inventory and Shipments Update – Mr. Ruggles noted that there is no update available yet, as he is still collecting processor reports. He hopes to have an update at next week’s Board meeting.
- CY23 Crop Update – Mr. Ruggles reviewed the current DFA inspection report and reminded the group that the current budget is based on an 80k ton crop estimate. After Chair Sousa, Jr. polled the members it was agreed that 80k tons was still an accurate estimate.
- Audit Committee – Mr. Ruggles reported that the Audit Committee met on December 5, 2023 and a clean opinion will be provided by the auditors.
- 2023/24 Budget Update – Mr. Ruggles reminded the members that the 2023/24 budget update was provided to them in a pre-read, noting that CDFA’s legal department is following up with three processors who are not complying with reporting requirements. Any resultant action may provide additional assessments funds on the previous year’s crop.
- Revised 2023/24 Budget – Mr. Ruggles noted that the group had seen the revised 2023/24 budget in the pre-reads. Revisions included: a balance from the previous marketing season; TASC funding/expense; EMP funding/expense; and nutrition research expense.

**On a motion by Mr. Bains and seconded by Mr. Singh, the following recommendation was approved unanimously:**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD IN MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED:

**To recommend to the full Board the 23/24 revised budget, as presented.**

- Assessment Formula Strategy – Mr. Zea discussed the tools used during the annual budgeting cycle:
  - inflation review: 3-year average
  - working capital guideline: protect against a 50,000 ton short crop
  - special projects: unforeseen opportunities where unplanned expenditures were made in the current year or a fixed-time project is forthcoming

Originally a taskforce was going to be developed to discuss this issue, but Mr. Zea informed the Executives that he believes that they are that taskforce. More discussions will be forthcoming.

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#### 5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- Staff Offsite Summary – The objectives of the recent staff offsite were: 1) to review the status of the takeaways from the previous year’s offsite, 2) to review the input staff had into the Executive Director’s 360-review, and 3) to identify new goals in pursuit of continuous improvement.

The key initiatives that were discussed were:

- Building on our value of customer service
- Industry communications
- Reviewing the current strategic plan and developing SMART objectives

- USDA Government Purchase Request – Mr. Zea was in Washington, D.C. a few weeks ago to talk about government purchases. He discussed with the group what the most realistic shipment expectations could be for spring 2024. The group agreed on 3-5k tons with a March/April delivery timeline.

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## 6. OTHER BUSINESS

- Meeting Schedule – 2024 – Ms. Poland noted that in their packets they have a recommended meeting schedule for the upcoming calendar year.
- Remaining Meetings for 2023 were reviewed.
- CM&S Research Conference and Workshop – Mr. Zea informed the group that Mr. Bagley had put together a very robust and comprehensive agenda for the upcoming conference and encouraged all to attend.

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## 7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the California Prune Board was adjourned at 12:21pm PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES of the MEETING  
of the  
AUDIT COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 10:00am PT  
CPB Office, 3017 Douglas Blvd, Suite 280, Roseville, CA 95661

Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Audit Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

Members Present:

Matt Bozzo  
Mike Vereschagin

Members Absent:

LindaKay Abdulian  
John Amarel  
Brian Dunning

Guests:

Steve Donaldson, Ginger Holzkecht, Matt Krehe (Gilbert CPAs), Becky Poland, Jared Ruggles, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Vereschagin, Chair of the California Prune Board Audit Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:03am PT. A quorum was not achieved.

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**2. PUBLIC/CHAIR COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the Chair or the public.

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**3. GILBERT CPAs presented the following reports:**

Mr. Krehe of Gilbert CPAs presented the audited financials, process and results of their FY23 audits for the California Prune Board (CPB), noting that the work took place over two phases: an interim visit in July 2023 and a year-end visit in September 2023.

The three documents presented today were as follows:

- **Required Communications** – The purpose of the [Required Communications](#) document is to present the results of the audit. An unmodified opinion (clean audit opinion) will be issued this year. Gilbert CPAs will also issue an unmodified opinion on the compliance audit over federal programs. There were no new accounting changes this year, and no adjustments as part of this audit, indicating a good level of control over financial statements, along with an absence of any errors over the year.
- **Financial Statements with Independent Auditor’s Report** - Mr. Krehe started with page 7 of the [Financial Statements with Independent Auditor’s Report](#), noting that assessments are the Board’s largest revenue item, and that this number varied significantly from ’21 through ’23. The next largest revenue item is the MAP program. Following the statements are the notes, and there were no significant changes from the previous year. The additional schedules at the back of this report are required for compliance with our federal award. The Board does a good job of managing this whole process.

- **Agreed-upon Procedures Report** – The [Agreed-upon Procedures Report](#) is an additional requirement of CDFA, where the auditors test internal controls, compliance over travel, lodging, meals and entertainment expenses, compliance over program-owned vehicles, compliance over transactions between the CPB and Prune Marketing Committee, and compliance with contracting guidelines. This year’s AUP report was once again clean.

By consensus, the Committee members unanimously recommended that the Board approve the draft California Prune Board FY23 Financial Audit report and Agreed-upon Procedures report as presented.

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**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Ruggles confirmed that the date of the next Audit Committee meeting is Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

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**5. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the Audit Committee of the California Prune Board adjourned at 10:39am PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES of the MEETING  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Thursday, December 7, 2023, 10:00am PT  
California Farm Bureau, 2600 River Plaza Drive, Centennial Room, Sacramento, CA 95833

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Bob Amarel  
Jaswant Bains  
Nick Cubre  
Rajeev Davit  
Brian Dunning  
Phil Filter  
Brendon Flynn  
John Friend  
Dane Lance  
Maxwell Norton  
Brad Schuler  
Sukhvinder Sidhu (Alt. For S. Mitchell)  
Ranvir Singh  
George Sousa, Jr.  
James Strong  
Gary Thiara  
Joe Turkovich  
Mike Vereschagin  
David Wohletz

**Members Absent:**

LindaKay Abdulian  
Dan Bozzo  
Jeff McLemore  
Sandra Mitchell

**Guests:**

Matt Bozzo, Zach Bagley, Terence Billingsley, Jazmine Dawson, Steve Donaldson, Kiaran Locy, Laurel Muir (SRG), Katie Naessens (Torrey), Gary Obenauf, Becky Poland, Steve Rasmussen (ShoEi), Esther Ritson-Elliott, Rob Renegar (SRG), Jared Ruggles, Sekul Spaich, Greg Thompson, Scott Workman, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair George Sousa, Jr. called the meeting to order at 10:03am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC/CHAIR COMMENTS**

There were no comments from the public. Chair Sousa, Jr. noted that the agenda today is full, but he invited anyone to ask questions as the meeting progressed.

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**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On a motion by Wohletz and a second by Mr. Dunning, the following resolution CPB Motion 2023-12-07 #01 was unanimously approved:

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD IN MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED:

That the minutes of the following meeting(s) be approved as presented:

- 06/01/23 Executive Committee
- 06/08/23 Board Meeting
- 07/27/23 Executive Committee
- 08/22/23 CM&S Research Committee
- 09/26/23 Executive Committee

The minutes can be found at this link: [CPB Minutes June through October 2023](#).

#### 4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

- CY23 1st Quarter Statistical Reports - Mr. Ruggles provided an update on the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter statistical report. Key highlights included a beginning 2023 inventory of \$39,908, which is up about 7% compared to the prior year. First quarter production numbers were 43,361 compared to 51,759 from the previous year. Total shipments in Q1 were down 4% from Q1 of the previous year, with domestic numbers up 10% and exports down 20%.
- CY23 Crop Update – The Executive Committee is holding to an estimate of 80k tons for 2023, but Mr. Zea asked the Board members to weigh in if they thought differently. There were no questions or concerns, leaving the estimate at 80k tons for now.
- CY23 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Budget Update – Mr. Ruggles shared the DFA inspection numbers as of the beginning of December for CY23 as compared to CY22:

#### DFA Inspections as of Beg. December:

Count/Pound	Crop Year 2023		Crop Year 2022	
	Weight in Tons	% of Total	Weight in Tons	% of Total
60 and Larger	33,361	57%	31,609	59%
61-80	19,331	33%	17,833	33%
81-100	4,288	7%	3,132	6%
101 and smaller	1,516	3%	1,007	2%
Total	58,496	100%	53,581	100%

- Revised 2023/24 Budget – Mr. Ruggles reminded the group that the [CPB Budget Update 12-07](#), along with the [2023/24 Proposed Revised Budget](#) were included in the pre-reads. Budget line item revisions included: a balance from the previous marketing season; EMP funding/expense; TASC funding/expense; and Nutrition Research expense. There were no questions or comments.

**On a motion by Mr. Dunning and a second by Mr. Bains, the following resolution CPB Motion 2023-12-07 #02 was unanimously approved:**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD IN MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED:

**To approve the CPB 2023/24 revised budget, as presented.**

- CY24 Budgeting – Assessment Review – The Executive Committee has been having an ongoing discussion about the current assessment, primarily because it is an important tool for budgeting each year. Mr. Zea noted that the line of credit has rarely been used, but while we continue to look for alternate sources of revenue, we have decided to take a more programmatic, formal approach to how we view assessments. The Executive Committee will serve as a taskforce to look at the details of this. The staff put together some discussion points to consider, inflation being one of them. Feedback from the Executive team is currently being taken into consideration and further review and discussion will take place soon, as part of this ongoing process.
- Staff Offsite Recap – Mr. Zea reported on the recent staff offsite during which attendees measured the group’s performance against the goals set out during the prior offsite. The strategic plan was reviewed, as well as Mr. Zea’s recent 360° assessment. In light of the staff’s commitment to continuous improvement, they recommitted themselves to the following key initiatives:



- Building on our value of Customer Service
- Industry Communication
- Reviewing the current strategic plan and development SMART objectives

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## 5. AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

- Review 2022/23 Audit Report – The Audit Committee met on Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> and Mr. Vereschagin, Chair of the Audit Committee explained that it was not a full committee. However, by consensus they made a recommendation to the Board to accept the results of the 2022/23 audit. Mr. Vereschagin noted that Gilbert CPAs indicated that the audit would result in a clean opinion once again this year, and the staff was complimented on their hard work. Links to the audit reports can be found below:

[CPB 2022/23 Financial Statements and Auditors' Reports](#)

[CPB 2022/23 Agreed Upon Procedures Report](#)

[CPB Required Communications](#)

**On a motion by Mr. Bains and a second by Mr. Wohletz, the following resolution CPB Motion 2023-12-07 #03 was unanimously approved:**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD IN MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED:

**To approve the 2022/23 CPB audit report, including the AUP report and required communications, as presented.**

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## 6. PROGRAM UPDATES

- Export – From the Export Committee meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Ritson-Elliott reported out the export data for 2022/23 that was reviewed, the key program highlights for 2023/24 and the headwinds that were discussed (i.e., Covid, geopolitical issues, global inflation, shipping, etc.) The Export Committee recommended to the Board to continue with the focus strategy and key markets:

Current Key MAP markets: Japan, Canada, Italy, UK and South Korea

Current EMP market: Mexico

Ms. Ritson-Elliott also provided information on the new Regional Agricultural Promotions Program (RAPP), confirming that on October 23<sup>rd</sup> the USDA announced \$2.3B in funding which will be made available through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). Of that amount, \$1B is identified in commodity purchases (export only) for international food aid to address global hunger with \$100M earmarked for specialty crops.

The largest amount of funding will be provided to the new Regional Agricultural Promotions Program (RAPP), with the first tranche set at \$300M. This program is intended to enable exporters to break into new markets and increase market share in growth markets. Those countries/regions that will be ineligible for funding include Canada, EU-27, Mexico and China (including Hong Kong and Macau). There will be special emphasis placed on Africa, Latin American/Caribbean and South/Southeast Asian regions.

The timeline for this first tranche of funding is as follows:

- November 17, 2023: RAPP rules published on Federal Register
- November 29, 2023: NOFO (Notice of Funding) published
- February 2, 2024: Applications due to FAS
- April/May 2024: Funding decisions will be announced
- June 2024 – September 2029: First tranche of funding (\$300M) will be awarded

Additionally, the Export and Executive Committees are in alignment on the following with regard to RAPP:

- Include Generic and Branded (as applicable) : 75% / 25% split should continue
- Include our core focus markets
- Look to the future: Set ourselves up for success which includes long-term relations with FAS: listen to messaging about their special emphasis regions - staff to recommend best approach

- 1<sup>st</sup> Tranche: Apply for maximum funds we can effectively and efficiently spend over 5-year period in relevant markets
- Marketing - Ms. Locy provided a domestic marketing/communications overview:



- The influencer Surprise & Delight shipments include a gift that is intended to keep California Prunes top-of-mind during peak promotional seasons, while strengthening relations with key tastemakers and getting a few bonus social posts too.
- The objective of the consumer research is to identify the best opportunity to make an impact with the CPB marketing budget, with a goal of increasing purchase frequency of prunes by targeting a tighter audience.
- Tailwinds include:
  - Food is medicine movement is opening the door for foods with specific benefits
  - Gut health is on the rise
  - Increased conversation on constipation
  - Increased cooking at home
  - Prunes are the healthiest of the dried fruits and equities to build on
  - Barriers/lack of usage can be resolved with education and awareness tactics.
- Headwinds include:
  - Dried fruit category lacks awareness of health benefits
  - Prunes fall to the middle of the category on likeability and show potential polarity
  - Barriers exist with both top-of-mind awareness and usage + myths about digestive impacts
  - Cranberries and Fruit Chips show leadership in health benefit and usage versatility
  - Prune juice needs further exploration on usage and barriers to determine ownership vs. prunes



- Production Research Conference Preview – Mr. Bagley previewed the upcoming Production Research Conference (December 13 and 14), noting that the agenda is comprehensive and attendance numbers are robust. Agenda highlights include:
  - **Horticulture Research** - Bloom Dynamics, Thinning, Hedging, Potassium Fertilization, Rootstock Evaluation, Precision Management,
  - **Research Infrastructure, Economics, and Funding Sources** - Farm Advisor support, Cost & Return Study, CDFA Funding Opportunities, CSU ARI Funding Opportunities,
  - **Special Session: Prune Varietal Program** - Update on location changes, Prune Cultivar Evaluation and Development, Prune Tasting and Evaluation, Panel Talks, Committee call,
  - **Disease Management** - Sulfuryl Fluoride, Chlorate Residues and EU trade, Spotted Lanternfly, PPV, Fruit Fly, Phellinus Wood Rot Management Update, Epidemiology and Management of Blossom, Leaf, And Fruit Diseases of Prune, Early Detection of Cytospora and Other Canker Diseases of Prune, Prune Brownline,
  - **Special Session: Dehydration Costs & Efficiency** - DOE Western Region Technical Assistance Providers, Examples of DOE funding use from another CA food industry, Two proposals on drying innovation, Committee call,
  - **Special Guest Speaker At Wednesday Night Dinner** - Gabe Youtsey, UCANR Chief Innovation Officer

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## 7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Government Purchase Considerations – Mr. Zea is working with the USDA to develop a plan for government purchases in 2024. The recommendation put forward by the Executives includes purchases totaling approximately 3-5k tons, in the size range of 60-85 count, from crop years 2023 and 2022, and with a delivery period around April-May 2024.
- USDA Pit Tolerance Request – Chair Sousa, Jr. noted that discussions have begun regarding the industry's current pit tolerance levels. Further investigation will be made into the possibility of tightening those tolerance levels, so that the industry maintains the same diligent levels of quality for the USDA as it does when selling to other customers.
- Farm Bill Status – Ms. Naessens from the Torrey Advisory Group presents a DC policy update for the group. She commented on two important items today: 1) continued funding for the government and 2) the Farm Bill process. The 2018 Farm Bill received an extension and it will now expire at the end of fiscal year 2024.

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## 8. OTHER BUSINESS

- 2024 Election Season – Ms. Poland reviewed the [Election Timetable](#) for the 2024-26 Term of Office that was provided in today's packets, reminded all that work for the 2024 election season had already begun, with nominations and elections coming soon for independent processors and producers.
- Schedule of Meetings and Events – Calendar Year 2024 – The committee reviewed the draft [Schedule of Meeting and Events – Calendar Year 2024](#).

On a motion by Mr. Thiara and a second by Mr. Singh, the following resolution CPB Motion 2023-12-07 #04 was unanimously approved:

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD IN MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED:

To accept the Schedule of Meetings and Events – Calendar Year 2024, as presented.

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## 9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting of the California Prune Board adjourned at 12:34pm PT.

Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
EXPORT COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Thursday, December 21, 9:00am PT  
Virtual: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86494697191>  
In-person: 3017 Douglas Blvd, Suite 280, Roseville, CA 95661

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Export Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Jaswant Bains  
Jeff McLemore  
Sandra Mitchell  
Rishi Raj  
Brad Schuler  
Steve Sousa

**Members Absent:**

Bob Amarel  
John Friend  
Junko Fuwa  
Sekul Spaich

**Guests:**

Stephanie Harralson, Julie Jenkins, Becky Poland, Esther Ritson-Elliott, Jared Ruggles, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Steve Sousa, Chair of the California Prune Board Export Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:03am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS / CHAIR COMMENTS**

Steve acknowledged that the meeting's content was self-explanatory and noted that, in his experience with other committees, CPB was well-positioned for this application process in comparison.

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**3. REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROMOTION PROGRAM (RAPP) – Report and Recommendations**

Ms. Ritson-Elliott provided additional information for the Committee based on meetings she had attended which were intended to clarify the process for this new program. Some noteworthy information included: Canada, the EU-27, Mexico, China and Hong Kong are ineligible for funding under RAPP. Funding instead should be focused on special-emphasis regions, namely Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. The first tranche of funding would likely be available by June 2024 and will span a five-year spending period. Concerns were expressed over the challenge of providing detailed activity recommendations for all five years in each market, given the timing and extent of this task. Ms. Ritson-Elliott outlined the CPB plan to apply for at least Japan and South Korea, and adding region(s) as well.

Ms. Ritson-Elliott discussed the extensive process involved in reviewing documents for RAPP. The team considered various markets of focus, including the UK, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, with a specific interest in Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and India. The financial scope of these plans, the challenges, and potential benefits of each market, and the first tranche of funding were also discussed. Ms. Ritson-Elliott

emphasized the long-term, positive mindset of these projects, highlighting them as opportunities to diversify and build, particularly in markets like Vietnam and Thailand.

Chair Sousa noted his confidence in Ms. Ritson-Elliott and her team's ability to finish this application by the deadline, including the Notice of Intent which is due on January 8, 2024. The decision to proceed with this application was met with consensus and the Committee agreed to move forward.

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**4. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the California Prune Board Export Committee adjourned at 9:42am PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Tuesday, January 30,2024, 10:00am PT  
3001 Douglas Blvd, First Floor Conference Room, Roseville, CA 95661

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Executive Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Jaswant Bains  
Dan Bozzo  
Brendon Flynn  
Dane Lance  
Sandra Mitchell  
Ranvir Singh  
George Sousa, Jr.  
Joe Turkovich

**Members Absent:**

None

**Guests:**

Jazmine Dawson, Steven Donaldson, Brian Dunning, Kiaran Locy, Becky Poland, Esther Ritson-Elliott, Jared Ruggles, Brad Schuler, Greg Thomspen, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. George Sousa, Jr., Chair of the Executive Committee of the California Prune Board, called the meeting to order at 10:02am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS/CHAIR COMMENTS**

No comments were made from the public or from the Chair.

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**3. STATISTICAL REPORT**

DFA Inspection Update – Mr. Ruggles presented the DFA inspection numbers as of January 25, 2024. The Committee was reminded that the 2023/24 budget is built on an estimated crop size of 80k tons. The members discussed and agreed that, while the crop will likely be significantly larger than the estimate, the budget would not be revised, but instead would continue to reflect the 80k estimate, providing a healthy reserve for next year.

<b>Count/Pound</b>	<b>Crop Year 2023 @ 1/25/24</b>		<b>Crop Year 2022 @ 2/1/23</b>	
	<b>Weight in Tons</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Weight in Tons</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
60 and Larger	44,621	57%	37,477	59%
61-80	26,032	33%	21,573	34%
81-100	5,816	7%	3,764	6%
101 and smaller	1,920	2%	1,028	2%
Total	78,389	100%	63,841	100%

Mr. Ruggles provided information regarding the world production update that will be presented in the INC Nutfruit, March 2024 edition. He noted that France is reporting an estimated ending stock from their 2023 harvest that is 8k MT more than what they had reported in November.

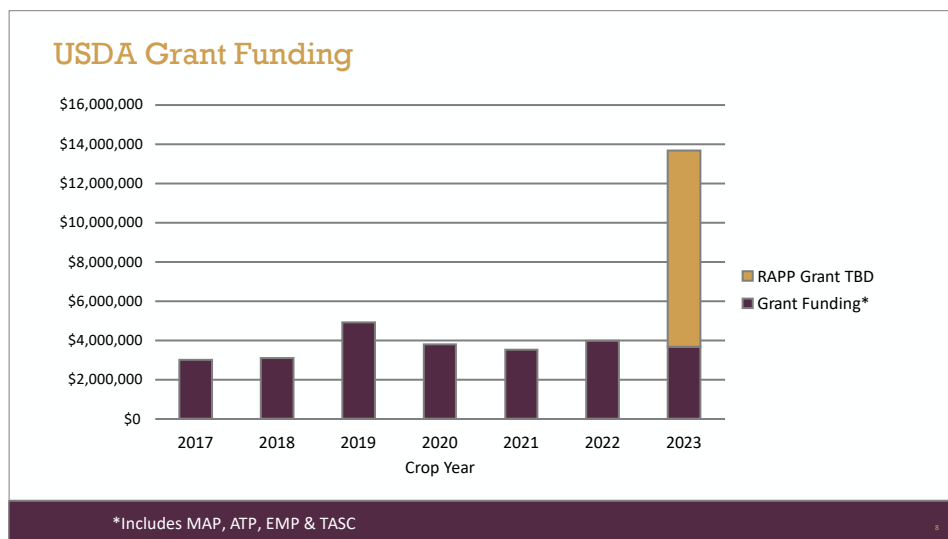
Metric Tons	2023/2024				2024/2025			
COUNTRY	BEG. STOCK	PRODUCTION	TOTAL SUPPLY	ENDING STOCK	BEG. STOCK	PRODUCTION	TOTAL SUPPLY	ENDING STOCK
USA	36,204	68,000	104,204	36,000	36,000	65,000	101,000	n/a
CHILE	5,000	68,000	73,000	10,000	10,000	68,000	78,000	n/a
FRANCE	13,500	40,000	53,500	23,500	23,500	40,000	63,500	n/a
ARGENTINA	3,000	20,000	23,000	3,000	3,000	33,000	36,000	n/a
SERBIA*	1,000	5,000	6,000	1,000	1,000	4,800	5,800	n/a
AUSTRALIA	0	2,500	2,500	0	0	1,500	1,500	n/a
ITALY	500	1,450	1,950	0	0	1,500	1,500	n/a
SOUTH AFRICA	0	604	604	0	0	0	0	n/a
<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	<b>59,204</b>	<b>205,554</b>	<b>264,758</b>	<b>73,500</b>	<b>73,500</b>	<b>213,800</b>	<b>287,300</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>WORLD CONSUMPTION (T. Supply - End. Stock)</b>				<b>191,258</b>				

#### 4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

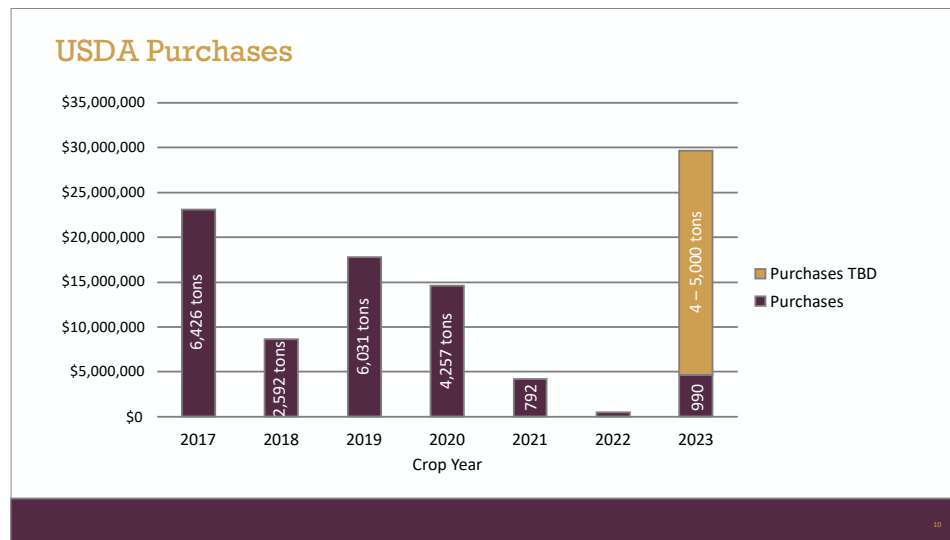
- MAP/RAPP Updates – Mr. Zea mentioned the email that he had recently distributed regarding this year's MAP allocation, noting that the CPB's export marketing allocation is \$3M, or 8% greater this year, while 68 awardees' allotments are down an average of 4%. It is important to note that only the California Walnut Commission and USA Rice Federation/U.S. Rice Producers Association were awarded more.

Mr. Zea gave credit to Ms. Ritson-Elliott's team for the teamwork exhibited during the preparation of the RAPP proposal. Ms. Ritson-Elliott noted that FAS has indicated it will use a slightly different process with the RAPP applications than is typically used with MAP. California Prunes' application was submitted for 5 years and \$9.5M, and addressed some enhanced regions and some focused regions.

Ms. Ritson-Elliott let the group know of the latest EMP award received by CPB this morning. This one is for Mexico, in the amount of \$415k. She also reminded the group that the MAP application process for 2025/26 would begin shortly.



- Government Purchases –  
Mr. Zea updated the group on USDA purchases, noting that our industry has already received \$5M from USDA purchases in this crop year and that he submitted an additional proposal with USDA in December 2023.



Mr. Zea provided the transcript of a communication between USDA and CPB regarding the USAID Food Purchase Program. Products sold in this program will be used to feed “needy countries.”

**From USDA:**

*USDA is working on a new Interagency Agreement with USAID for sending more US produced agricultural products to needy countries. I don't have all the details of the process, but it sounds like it will be similar to USDA CCC purchases. FAS is asking AMS to put together a quarterly list of products to recommend to USAID to purchase. Yes, I think it will go through two different agencies to determine what is purchased.*

*I've been asked to put together a list of specialty crops that could support additional international purchases. If you think your industry could support additional international purchases, please send me a rough dollar amount by commodity for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2024 that your industry could support. If you have numbers by quarter for the rest of the year that would be helpful but not necessary. I'll follow up with you before sending recommendations forward for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters because conditions will change. If you could include a rough number of pounds that dollar amount equates to that would be helpful in determining freight. Feel free to ask me questions, I do my best to answer them. This is going to be a pilot program so there will be a few bumps.*

**Our response:**

*Although the total tonnage solicited in our current Section 32 request of 4000 – 5000 short tons/\$20-\$25 million will have some influence on our estimates for the USAID program, our larger-than-expected '23 crop and the increasing tonnage globally due to larger crops, plus the well-documented economic headwinds and ag trade slowdown, is putting big upward pressure on our inventory.*

*To directly answer your questions, our industry could support a \$5 million purchase for USAID in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. That would estimate at approximately 1000 tons of 24/1lb bag cases (or any similar arrangement per the requirements). We could do the same in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters. This would be achievable in addition to a 5,000 ton, \$25 million Section 32 purchase currently being considered. Delivery schedules for the aggregate tonnage would preferably be divided into two to three timeframes.*

Additionally, Mr. Zea provided an update on our request to tighten up the pit tolerance levels for our industry. He recently learned that this is not a USDA issue, rather it would need to be handled with FDA, which is currently down staffed to such low levels that they would not be able to handle this kind of request right now. Mr. Zea and Mr. Jones, from Safe Food Alliance, will continue to work on this.



**Commodity Specification Amendment**

According to USDA:

*Changing the FDA regulation is a multiyear process, according to USDA.*

**Our original request:**

**The pit level for whole pitted prunes would change to .1% (or 1/1000).** It is currently .2% (the published spec– January 2021 - is erroneously identified at 2%, as a decimal is missing.

**USDA response:**

**This is an FDA regulation and cannot be altered. Please see regulation underlined below.**

**Average of 2% or more by count with whole pits and/or pit fragments 2 mm or longer and 4 or more of 10 subsamples of pitted prunes have 2% or more by count with whole pits and/or pit fragments 2 mm or longer. (Current commodity spec reads: *Pits may not have an average of 2% or more as outlined in the FDA Defect Action Level*).**

- Elections Update – Mr. Zea provided the Executives with an update on the elections process, noting that nomination meetings would be taking place in February for independent producers and for independent processors (separately). CDFA will handle the ballot process for the independent producers after their nomination meeting, which will take place on February 2, 2024.

The two largest independent processors (Mariani and Sacramento Packing) will select their own members/alternates. The remaining eligible independent processors who can nominate/vote for the two remaining seats at the February 12, 2024 nomination meeting, are listed below:

**List of Independent Processors/Representation for 2024 -26**

	PROCESSOR NAME	SEATS/REPRESENTATION
<b>Two largest:</b>	MARIANI PACKING CO., INC.	1
	SACRAMENTO PACKING CO	1
<b>Next three largest:</b>	CAL FRUIT INTERNATIONAL	} 1
	SHOEI FOODS	
	WILBUR PACKING CO.	
<b>All others:</b>	CA PACKING CO.	} 1
	CAL PRUNE & NUT LLC	
	CAL RANCH, INC.	
	DALE PACKING	
	DAVIDSBROS TRADING LLC	
	HILL VIEW PACKING CO, INC.	
	JB CUSICK CO.	
	KALKAT FRUIT & NUT CO.	
	MIKI ORCHARDS	
	NATIONAL RAISIN CO.	
	RPC PACKING	
	SOWDEN BROTHERS	
SUN-MAID GROWERS OF CA		
SUTTER BUTTES MERCANTILE LLC		
TAYLOR BROTHERS FARMS, INC.		

All new Board members and alternates will be seated at the June 2024 Board meeting.

**5. INDUSTRY POSITIONING AND KEY MESSAGES**

Ms. Locy shared that staff has been developing the following positioning statement, which represents the desired perception we want the California Prune industry to hold of the California Prune Board. It should represent what we want people to think when they hear the organization’s name:

“The California Prune Board works hand-in-hand with growers and handlers for their long-term success.”

The associated messaging represents key ideas that “we want to consistently communicate to support our positioning statement.” These are listed below:

The California Prune Board:

1. Unites growers and handlers on activities the industry can be proud of.
2. Serves growers and handlers of all types.
3. Drives demand and value for premium California Prunes.
  - The “California difference” isn’t possible without you.
  - Production research furthers the industry’s competitive advantage.
  - Nutrition research is leveraged to expand visibility and build demand.
4. Punches above its weight, giving the industry a good ROI.
5. Encourages growers and handlers to get involved.
6. Gives the industry a seat at the table/advocates on behalf of California Prunes.

Ms. Lucy asked the group to know these messages, understand the concepts, and know what samples you can serve up. It was suggested by the group that small video clips could be recorded to address each of the six key messages. The staff will take this suggestion under consideration, and Ms. Lucy will follow up with anyone individually, as needed over the next year.

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## 6. MEETINGS AND KEY EVENTS

Meetings and events through June 2024 were shared with the group:

Affiliation	Meeting	Day	Month	Date	Location
Board	Executive Committee	Tuesday	January	30	3001 Douglas Blvd, Roseville
Industry	UCCE North Sac Valley Prune Day	Thursday	February	1	Elks Lodge, Red Bluff
Board	Nomination Meeting-Independent Growers	Friday		2	Virtual
Board	Marketing Committee (full-day)	Tuesday		6	TDB
Board	Gov’t & Issues Management Committee Crop	Thursday		8	CA Farm Bureau, Sacto
Board	Mgmt. & Sustainability Research Comm	Thursday		8	CA Farm Bureau, Sacto
Board	Nomination Meeting-Independent Handlers	Monday		12	Virtual
Industry	UCCE South Sac Valley Prune Day	Tuesday		27	Sutter Ag Comm, Yuba City
Board	Nutrition Research Committee	Thursday	March	7	3017 Douglas Blvd #280, Rsvl
Board	Export Committee	Thursday		14	3001 Douglas Blvd, Roseville
Board	Executive Committee	Thursday		14	3001 Douglas Blvd, Roseville
Board	<b>California Prune Board</b>	<b>Thursday</b>		<b>21</b>	CA Farm Bureau, Sacto
Industry	JNC	Wed-Fri	May	8-10	Vancouver, BC, Canada
Industry	UC Research Field Tour	Tues & Wed		14 & 15	Various
Board	Marketing Committee	Thursday		16	3001 Douglas Blvd, Roseville
Board	Executive Committee	Thursday		16	3001 Douglas Blvd, Roseville
Industry	Annual DC Delegation Trip	Mon-Wed		20-22	Washington, DC
Board	Executive Committee	Tuesday	June	11	3017 Douglas Blvd #280, Rsvl
Board	<b>California Prune Board</b>	<b>Thursday</b>		<b>13</b>	CA Farm Bureau, Sacto

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## 7. OTHER BUSINESS

- Mr. Zea shared that, as part of our role as global leaders, the Board has been asked to assist a student from France who is interning later this year, in order to later manage the French prune organization. He’ll arrive in California during the summer of 2024 and will be spending 3-4 weeks here as part of his master’s degree program. The Board plans to assist him with coordination, meetings, tours, etc. during his stay.
- Australian Prune growers have to asked to visit our area to tour for a few days. They will be looking at other commodities as well.
- Chair Sousa, Jr. asked for an update on the assessment issue and Mr. Zea reminded him that the group previously agreed to present this to the March Board meeting. There will be further discussion at the Executive Committee meeting just prior to the Board meeting.
- Mr. Zea and Mr. Bagley just had a phone call with Ms. Trudy Hughes and they agreed to work with some agricultural processors to put together an energy roundtable, keeping it small at first. The aim is to fund a quick study that would scope out the increased cost of food from electrification.
- With Mr. Dan Bozzo’s impending retirement and his choice to step down from the Executive Committee, Chair Sousa, Jr. extended his appreciation for Mr. Bozzo’s contributions to this

committee, and to all meetings in which he participates and contributes. He is recognized as an advocate to all prune growers, and holds a significant role in the prune industry. The group extended their appreciation to Mr. Bozzo.

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**8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the California Prune Board was adjourned at 12:00pm PT.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donn Zea". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES of the MEETING  
of the  
MARKETING COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 9:00am – 3:00pm PT  
Hotel Winters, 12 Abbey Street, Grove and Vineyard Rooms, Winters, CA 95694

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Marketing Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Jaswant Bains  
Terence Billingsley  
Stephanie Harralson  
Jeff McLemore  
Sandra Mitchell  
Brad Schuler

**Members Absent:**

Matt Bozzo  
Dave Loquaci  
Jesus Valdez

**Guests:**

Allison, Beadle, KC Cornwell, Jazmine Dawson, Andrea Giancoli, Kieran Locy, Becky Poland, Rob Renegar, Dan Reilly, Jared Ruggles, Molly Sahebjami, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Schuler, Chair of the Marketing Committee of the California Prune Board, called the meeting to order at 9:11am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC/CHAIR COMMENTS**

Chairman Schuler welcomed committee members and guests.

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**3. MARKET RESEARCH DATA & LEARNINGS**

- The California Prune Board engaged SRG to conduct an Attitudes & Usages study (A&U) to understand consumer attitudes and perceptions towards prunes, understand how prunes are currently being used, and to identify barriers & opportunities for growth. Additionally, CPB wanted to identify a new consumer target audience through the A&U work. Mr. Renegar from SRG shared their findings of the A&U.

Dried Fruit Category Overview:

- Prunes rank in the top-5 for unaided awareness (top-of-mind), rounding out the tier-2 fruits that follow raisins, the clear #1.
- Prunes get credit for being healthy, leading all others dried fruits, though they fall more into the middle of the pack based on consumer liking.
- Prune juice struggles on relevance with consumers and is amid the bottom tier of fruit juices for unaided awareness.

#### Prunes – Usage and Performance:

- Consumers tend to eat prunes by themselves, with no other foods or beverages. The sweet spot for prunes appears to be five prunes as nearly half of consumers indicate they normally have at least five prunes per occasion.
- Aside from a tasty snack that also provides a healthier alternative to other foods, consumers choose to have prunes for specific health benefits, in support of their digestive system, and something to supplement their diet.
- Consumers most associate prunes with bowel and digestive health, more so than any other dried fruit. Prunes also get credit for fiber content and being healthy, maintaining an advantage in these areas as well.
- Consumers indicate that helping with inflammation has a strong relationship with perceptions of being healthy, but the direct relationship with prunes is weaker. Improved communication around this benefit and helping consumers see how prunes provide this would help move this up into the Fundamental Driver area.
- Prune juice is consumed by itself. Five to eight ounces is how much the majority of consumers (~60%) have when they choose to drink prune juice, with an average of 7oz being consumer per occasion.
- Similar to prunes, “mind share” barriers and bowel/digestive impact are both prevalent reasons among current prune juice users for not using more prune juice.

#### Prunes – Additional Influences:

- Reaffirming benefits, especially those that prunes are already the most strongly affiliated with — bowel & digestive health, fiber content — could also provide a positive impact on consumers likelihood to purchase prunes. Being a source of copper and aligning with specific dietary needs are less aligned and are less influential as other prune benefits.
- Prune consumers feel good about eating California Prunes and supporting an American agricultural base. There is a desire to learn more about how prunes are grown, and consumers are also not as well versed on how prunes compare to other orchard crops for water use.

- **Target Identification**

A total of seven groups were evaluated and of those, three priorities were selected for targeting based on growth opportunities: food and cooking enthusiasts, pragmatists, content and balanced. Based on a volume modeling exercise, the “Food & Cooking Enthusiast” group had the highest volume impact for prunes. As a result of this, and the other group demographics and prune usage traits, lead to the choice and recommendation of the “Food & Cooking Enthusiast” group for further understanding as a target.

- **Opportunities and Barriers for Focused Messages and Usages**

Consumer Discussion Groups with Food & Cooking Enthusiasts Key Findings:

- Heavy, Medium / Light, and Non-Users are unique target audiences with different usage of dried fruit and perceptions and use of prunes.
- Heavier users are the most involved in health and well-being.
- Across targets, most consumers enjoy cooking and have confidence to add their own touches—though prunes are not being used often.
- While dried fruit is used more often in baking vs. cooking, there is still little prune usage.
- Dried fruit (among users) is valued for benefits as a collective, but specific dried fruits have unique motivations.
- Category barriers to dried fruit vary as well and vary based on the use group within the audience.
- Use of dried fruit is extensive, with breakfast appearing as a significant opportunity with varied usage.
- Prunes have a significant association with constipation relief and digestion—so prominent that while a motivator (in part) for heavy users, creates strong perception and use barriers.
- Prunes have a meaningful opportunity to redefine themselves, growing product and health equities to appeal to a wider, younger audience.
- Few consumers talked unaided about the TASTE of prunes, indicating an opportunity to build and differentiate across all targets.

- Heavy Users are believers, but also limit their consumption.
- Medium / Light Users: there is much less dried fruit engagement vs. heavy users, and as they don't have a prune snacking habit already associated, prunes will need to find other ways to gain traction with this group both in terms of use and perceptions/benefits.
- Non-Users: do not recommend moving forward with non-users given significantly low-to-nonexistent engagement with dried fruit and prunes are very far from their consideration set.

Key Considerations as recommended by SRG:

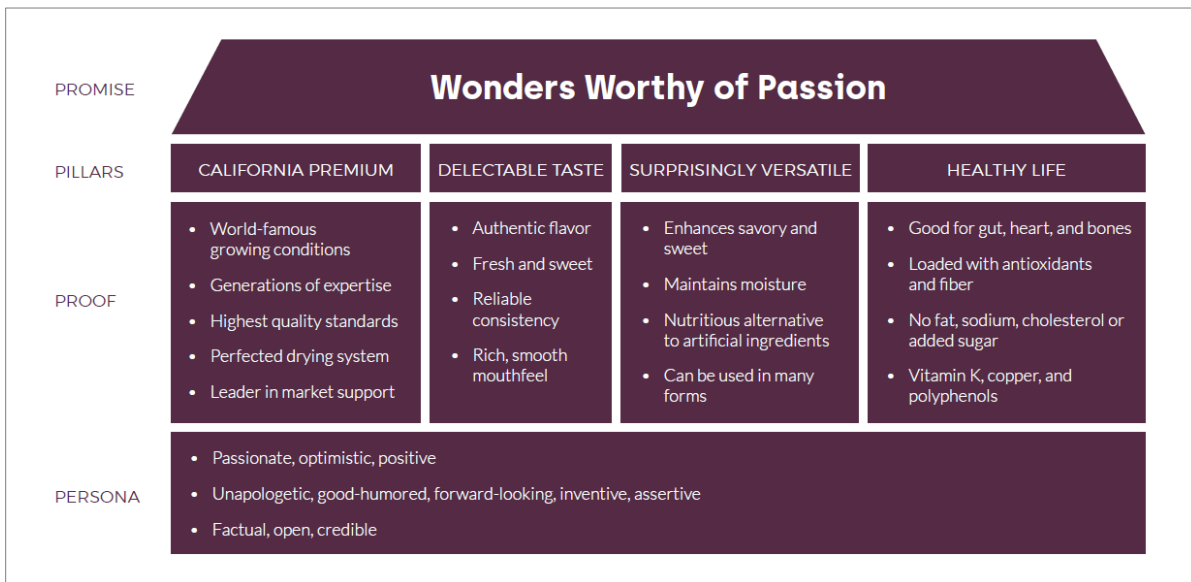
- Focus on Heavy Users and Medium / Light (prioritizing Medium over Light) for the most efficient spend and greatest opportunity for impact. Reframe prune perceptions and bring new news to prunes through three primary areas: Brand, Product, and Messaging.

#### 4. BRAND STRATEGY

- Ms. Locy reviewed key activities from the past several years including the brand launch, strategic planning imperatives for the Board, a focus on digital, key learnings from nutrition communications, continuous improvement in measurement and global brand alignment, the importance of the U.S. market, and the need to put the target audience in focus.

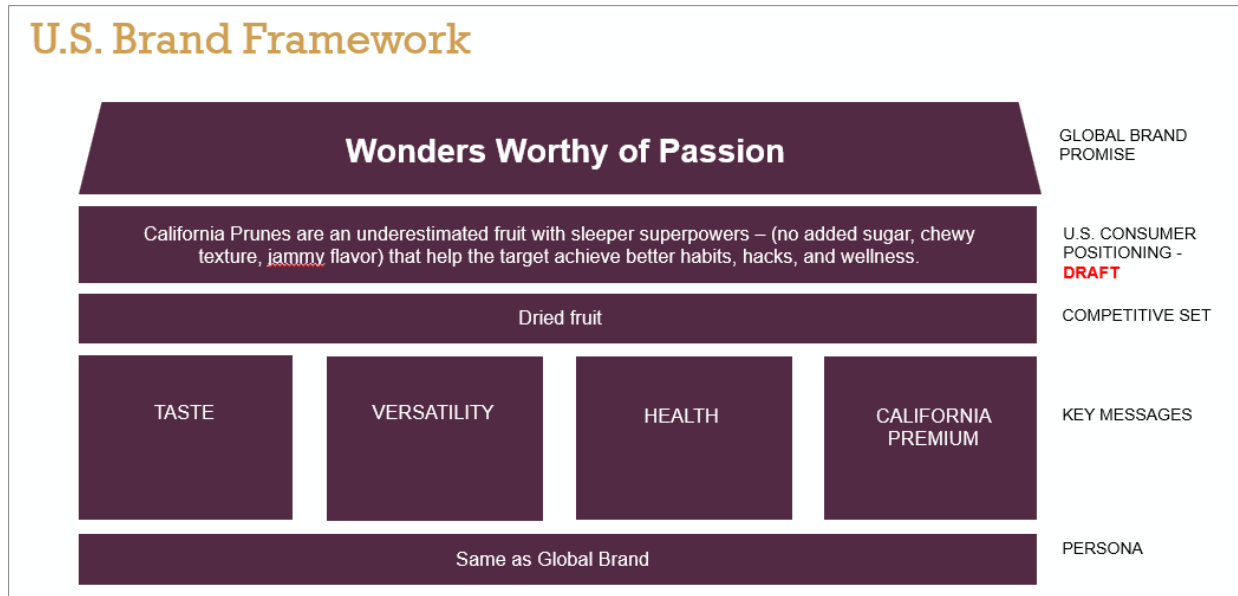
**Positioning Specific to the U.S.** – The marketing/communications team shared additional key considerations for landing on a target audience and future planning imperatives which include: Messages that resonate; Recipe and use occasions; Medicinal use; Snacking; Usage Friends; Recipe Discovery; Health Factors; Equity in Gut Health; Current research and pathway to health claims; Believability; Idea of Achievement; Program Performance Success; Existing assets.

A reminder of the Global Brand House was discussed as a reminder that this is a representation of the full Board; the purpose of the brand promise is the “why”



- **Strategic Recommendations and Framework for Messaging**

Ms. Beadle (Wild Hive) introduced the following suggested changes to the U.S. Brand Framework:



Deeper dives on target barriers included the following:

**HEAVY CONSUMERS:**

- Bowel-related concerns about eating and full serving size
- They don't know the full extent of prunes' health benefits
- They haven't thought about prunes much as an ingredient rather than just a snack

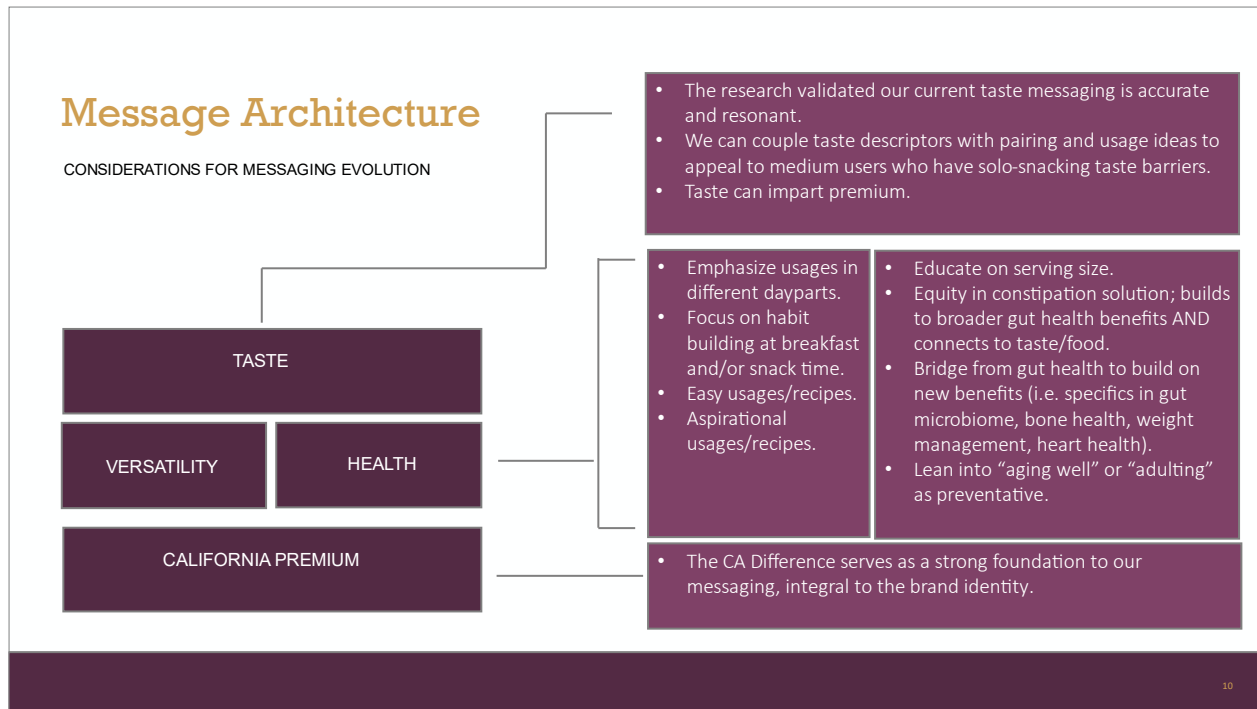
**MEDIUM CONSUMERS:**

- Low top-of-mind awareness for prunes
- Don't know the full extent of prunes' health benefits
- They have taste-related hesitation about eating prunes solo as a snack

With a newly defined target, we can further focus efforts on changing perception and building their top-of-mind awareness. Achievable ways of overcoming barriers:

**HEAVY AND MEDIUM CONSUMERS:**

- They have everyday food & cooking habits already established, and they are receptive to easy prune usage ideas and recipes
- For both groups, taste is important, so healthy usage ideas and easy recipes will be key
- A desire to be healthy is a major driver in their everyday cooking habits, and they are receptive to messages about prune serving size and health benefits



### Committee discussion and guidance based on strategic recommendations and messaging:

- The committee discussed the definition of segmentation for the user types and challenges to increase consumption for the heavy and medium groups.
- Considering CPB’s role in marketing and communication as creating an environment that allows an audience to react more positively to the efforts of the brands, the committee provided guidance to continue to refine and clarify the specific target and objective.
- The committee discussed the use of limited resources for the marketing program and focusing goals around targeting the heavy and medium consumer groups within the Food & Cooking Enthusiasts to change perceptions toward prunes and create advocates/passionate prune fans. The research clearly indicated the need for an updated, more exciting perception of prunes.
- If CPB’s goals could be centered around these perception issues among a small target, then brands’ roles could be centered around utilizing this passion and increasing sales among other, lower-consumption consumers. (We also mentioned the possibility of medium users as a primary target and heavy users as a secondary target that’s possible to reach with very similar messaging.)
- There was committee guidance to focus on the important differences among life stages regarding health benefits. From this, we aligned on the need to narrow/define our demographic target (particularly age range) within the Food & Cooking Enthusiast (FCE) (or segment the messaging if we have multiple life stages within the target).
- The committee discussed current perceptions and message prioritization. We agreed that based on how we define the target, we will refine the message pillars and messaging, with more message testing to come in FY25 for further refinement or validation.

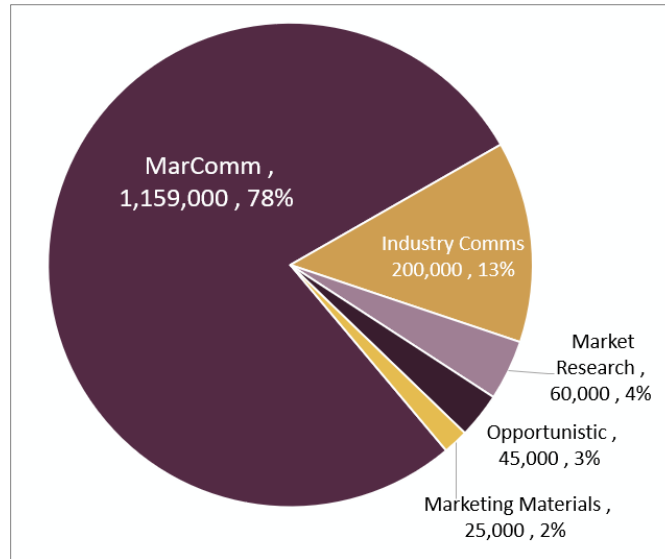
Ms. Locy shared a potential timeline for next steps for the Marketing program over the next year which will be revised based on committee guidance.

The group agreed that the target will continue to be the Food & Cooking Enthusiast. With SRG’s help, decisions on the usage groups and demographics within that target will be determined. Next steps were discussed and, based on how the target is defined, the pillars and messaging would continue to evolve; with more testing in FY2025 further refinement or validation would be considered.



**5. PROGRAM PERFORMANCE TO DATE**

Ms. Lucy led a discussion regarding the performance of the Marketing program highlighting the outward-looking Marketing/Communications metrics (78% of the marketing budget) which were shared with the committee.



CPB’s Marketing program ROIs are identified here:

	2022/23 Metrics	2023/24 Metrics, to date
<b>Earned Media (PR)</b>	794.5 Million impressions	644 Million impressions
<b>Digital Program</b>	8.16 Million Impressions + Views	7,475,999 Impressions + Views

The marketing budget costs the industry \$18.61 per ton\*

**Consumer Media**

- Consumer media efforts are currently focused on reaching large audiences via culinary and nutrition experts whom CPB has actively engaged.
- Consumer Earned Media results to date: 17 placements resulting in 644M impressions.
- Message pull through is currently:
  - o 32% of total media placements highlight taste and versatility.
  - o 72% of total media placements highlight health benefits (38% gut health/digestion; 23% bone health; 31% other health benefits)
- Media dieticians, culinary, and social media partners incorporate our health, taste and versatility messaging into their content, engaging their large audiences on our behalf.
- Stories that message CPB-funded research and position California Prunes as a superfood continue to land well and garner high impressions, positive feedback and additional coverage.

**Digital**

- We are continuously evaluating and selecting influencers and social media partners that make a difference on multiple platforms – getting us more bang for our buck when working with influencers. To date, the CPB influencer program has engaged in 21 partnerships (goal of 30+) achieving 1.6 million impressions + views and 115,534 engagements on paid program content (goal: 5 M impressions + views with 150,000 engagements on paid content)

- Teri Turner from No Crumbs Left hosted a “show us how you cook with prunes challenge” achieving 2.1 million impressions + views, surpassing our goal of 1 million. The campaign was a repeat of last year’s holiday campaign and was even more successful with nearly 500 entries. The contest did so well that we added an additional spin off as a challenge. We asked consumers to film themselves trying prunes for the first time or trying them for the first time in a long time. This picked up a lot of traction. The impact here is more top of mind awareness, word of mouth recommendations, and a new perspective on taste and versatility.
- The CPB owned social media channels are performing well achieving 5.8 M impressions + views (goal of 5M) with 5.7% engagement (goal of 3.5%) on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube.
- CPB launched on TikTok resulting in 50,000 views to date (goal of 25,000 views).

#### Website Redesign

- CPB staff shared an update about the redesign of the website.
- The objectives for the website redesign were to increase website visibility, improve user experience, and functionality. These focus areas tie into one another and support efforts to have the website serve as the authority on all things prune related.
- All pages, recipes and pieces of content were updated and optimized with the newest SEO technology. SEO has associated metrics but is fundamentally a practice or area of expertise used to improve visibility and traffic. The on-page SEO score increased from the low 50’s to 78 in six months, indicating successful implementation of new practices. Websites with better SEO scores rank higher with Google. Users see higher ranked pages first when they search.
- Core web vitals show that our updated website is healthy and performing as it should.
- Website traffic is primarily coming from search engine activity. Direct traffic is the secondary source of site visitors. This indicates that CPB may already be seen as the go-to website for prune expertise, as visitors are coming directly to the site for content.
- Most visitors are viewing recipes when they visit our website. Prune cake continues to be the highest searched term that leads consumers to the CPB website.

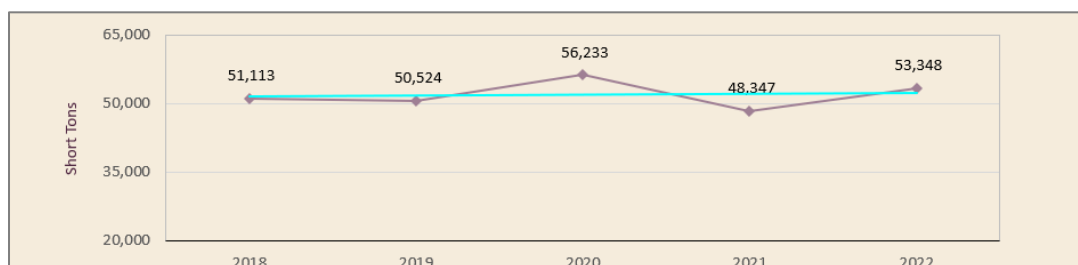
#### Nutrition Communications

- With healthcare Professionals as the target audience, this portion of the program has focused on building relationships with media RDs and communication via nutrition research news and the nutrition newsletter.
- Highlights from Aug. – December included the CPB sponsorship of Party in the Pink at FNCE, reviewing and revising our target list of media dietitians, creating new content for this audience and platforming the content on the redesigned website.
- Consumer research will help us continue to refine who our top target media dietitians should be, how we may reprioritize health benefit messaging, and how messaging can be more resonant with consumers.
- There are two webinars planned with the Culinary Nutrition Collaborative and the announcement of the recently published Inflammation paper.

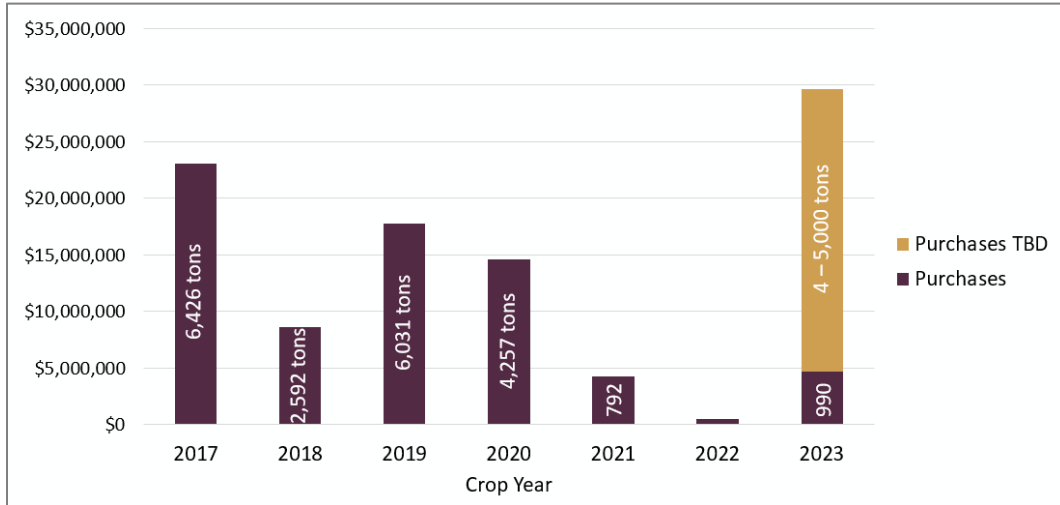
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## 6. DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION DISCUSSION

- **Impact of Government Buys** - The U.S. maintains a clear differential in average value compared to the three lead competitors, growing steadily to ensure a competitive, yet manageable, gap. At the end of the 2022/23 crop year the U.S. had a 21% premium over Chile; with Chilean prunes currently experiencing 6% deflation in average value this premium has currently widened to 43%. The 5-year trend for domestic shipments is displayed in the graph below:



The impact of USDA purchases from 2017 to 2023 is evidenced in the bar graph below:



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### 7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting of the Marketing Committee of the California Prune Board adjourned at 3:00pm PT.

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Respectfully submitted,

Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES of the MEETING  
of the  
CROP MANAGEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Thursday, February 8, 2024, 12:30pm PT  
California Farm Bureau Federation, 2600 River Plaza Drive, Centennial Room, Sacramento, CA 95833

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Crop Management & Sustainability Research Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

John Amarel  
Nick Cubre  
Andy Kennedy  
Maxwell Norton  
Pete Righero  
Sukhvinder Sidhu  
Greg Thompson  
Joe Turkovich  
Mike Turkovich  
Michael Vasey  
Mike Vereschagin  
David Wohletz  
Scott Workman

**Members Absent:**

Matt Bozzo  
Rajeev Davit  
Brendon Flynn  
Harman Gosal  
Tirath Johal  
Louie Martinez, Jr.  
Ranvir Singh  
John Taylor  
Harold Upton  
Melvin Ward

**Guests:**

Zach Bagley, Jazmine Dawson, Kiaran Locy, Franz Niederholzer, Gary Obenauf, Becky Poland, Jared Ruggles, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. John Amarel, Vice-Chair of the Crop Management & Sustainability Research Committee, called the meeting to order at 12:39pm PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC/CHAIR COMMENTS**

Mr. Bagley welcomed everyone and expressed appreciation for the time the Committee has taken to prepare for and then attend this meeting.

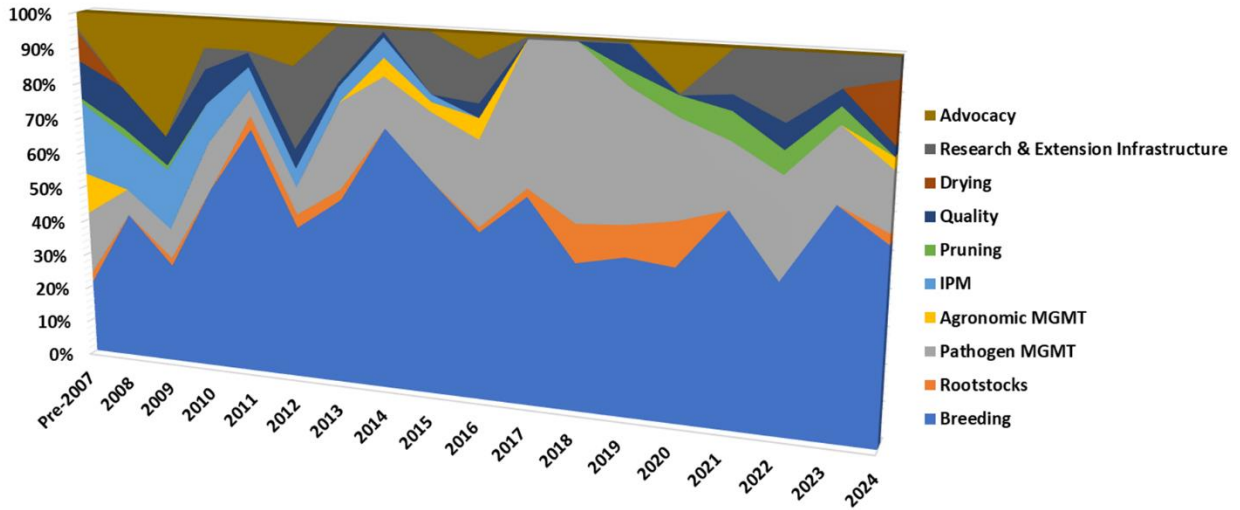
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**3. WORK MATERIALS REVIEW**

Mr. Bagley reminded the members that the proposals were provided to them in the pre-read documents. A few copies were distributed in the meeting room for reference. Mr. Niederholzer was in attendance to answer

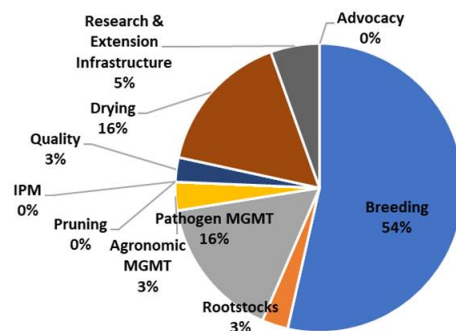
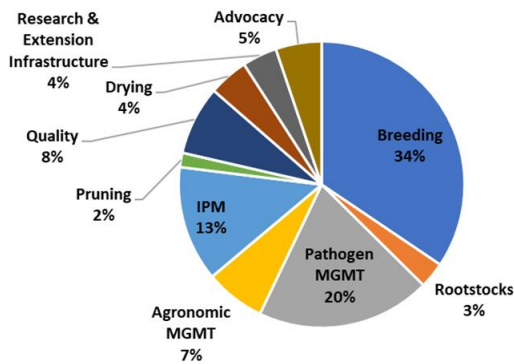
questions regarding the UC research proposal review process. All proposals that the committee reviewed today did pass through the UC research proposal review committee.

As a reminder, Mr. Bagley reviewed historical research funding, the research score card, the Board’s strategic priorities, the CM&S research priorities, and the location of the past research reports online (<https://fruitsandnuts.ucdavis.edu/collaborators/california-prune-board/reports>) which are all foundational to this process. See below:



Research Funding: 1980-2023		
Research Area	Funding	%
Breeding	\$ 3,436,090	34%
Rootstocks	\$ 295,153	3%
Pathogen MGMT	\$ 1,967,441	20%
Agronomic MGMT	\$ 677,531	7%
IPM	\$ 1,303,712	13%
Pruning	\$ 161,349	2%
Quality	\$ 780,189	8%
Drying	\$ 446,497	4%
Research & Extension Infrastructure	\$ 392,051	4%
Advocacy	\$ 518,690	5%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 9,978,703</b>	<b>100%</b>

Research Funding Request: 2024		
Research Area	Funding	%
Breeding	\$ 298,236	54%
Rootstocks	\$ 16,300	3%
Pathogen MGMT	\$ 89,108	16%
Agronomic MGMT	\$ 17,694	3%
IPM		0%
Pruning		0%
Quality	\$ 15,275	3%
Drying	\$ 89,760	16%
Research & Extension Infrastructure	\$ 30,500	5%
Advocacy		0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 556,873</b>	<b>100%</b>



Potential to Improve Returns						Criteria for Evaluation					TOTALS
Decrease production cost	Improve Size & Quality	Improve Safety & Reduce Costs	Improve dehydration or processing efficiency	More environmentally-friendly vs Standard?	More consistent production from year to year	Sound scientific project design	Potential ROI	Reputation of Researcher /Institution	Industry-wide vs Local	Project funding from other sources	Potential for Success

# Strategic Priorities

**TRADE POLICY & MARKET SUPPORT**

*Government purchases, ATP/MAP funding, trade relations*

**UNIFIED INDUSTRY**

*Expanding involvement, improving connections, sharing value*

**EXPANDING VISIBILITY**

*Global marketing and public relations*

**NUTRITION RESEARCH**

*Expanding our understanding of health benefits*

**PRODUCTION RESEARCH**

*Lowering costs, improving California Prune quality, protecting investments*


**Mission**  
 Unite growers and packers to drive essential activities that support the California Prune industry.

**Vision**  
 A world enthusiastic about California Prunes.

**Purpose**  
 Promote lifetime wellness through the enjoyment of California Prunes.

**Values**

- Operate with integrity
- Engage in respectful dialogue
- Embrace challenge and change
- Committed to prune quality and continuous improvement
- Have an attitude of customer service towards our stakeholders



PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS	MOST POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE RETURNS	RATIONALE
Disease Management	Pruning Techniques & Efficiency	Decrease production cost
Crop Management	Drying	Improve product size, quality and safety
Water Management	Bloom Issues	Improve dehydration or processing efficiency
Pest Management	Disease Control	Offer more environmentally-friendly alternatives to currently used materials
Breeding New Varieties	Tree Related Issues	More consistent production from year to year
Environmental and Regulatory	Chemical	Sound scientific project design
Soil Management		Potential return on investment/payback
Weed Management		Reputation of researcher/organization versus possible alternatives
		Industry-wide problem versus localized problem
		Project funding from other sources

**California Prunes substantially invests in production research to improve the many facets of the industry's sustainability, including:**

- Decreasing production costs
- Improving prune size and quality
- Improving worker safety and labor costs
- Improving dehydration or processing efficiency
- environmentally friendly alternatives to current materials
- Improving consistent year-to-year production

**4. 2024 PROGRAM AND 2023/24 FINAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD**

Mr. Bagley walked the committee members through each of the proposals and provided time for discussions and questions. The total cost of recommended projects is \$556,873. The full list of 2024 proposals is found below:

**Varietal Improvements:**

Prune Cultivar Evaluation and Development	\$137,386
Field Evaluation of Prune Rootstocks, 2024	16,300

<b>Flower &amp; Fruit Development:</b>	
Heat Risk at Bloom	15,275
Mechanical Prune trial in French Prune	--
Exploration of Potassium Fertilization...	17,694
<b>Disease Management:</b>	
Epidemiology and Management of Blossom, Leaf, and Fruit Diseases	24,000
Reducing Canker Development on Wounds Post Hedge...	22,124
Understanding Transmission and Control of Phellinus pomaceus in Prune	42,984
<b>Innovation in Prune Drying Technology:</b>	
Reduction of Energy Consumption During Prune Drying...	40,000
Development of a Sequential Microwave and Hot Air Drying Method...	49,760
<b>Research Infrastructure Support:</b>	
CA Prune Research Reports Database	2,500
Commodity Board Support for Orchard Crop Farm Advisors	<u>28,000</u>
<b>Total Research Funding Request</b>	<b>\$396,023</b>
<b>Varietal selection (Block Plantings &amp; Land Management):</b>	
New varietal plantings and processing	131,000*
Sierra Gold (contract has now been signed)	<u>29,850</u>
<b>Total Research &amp; Varietal Funding Request</b>	<b><u>\$556,873</u></b>

\*Handful of new selections will continue to come on line through 2035. But we don't have any new selections this year, so this \$131k will change from year to year.

All proposals were recommended as presented. A few discussion notes which will be followed up on directly by Mr. Bagley with researchers:

- Heat Risk at Bloom – It is clear that this project has value in data collection and engagement of UCANR County level Advisors. The Committee communicated with Mr. Niederholzer the need to understand the value on applied in field changes which growers could take from the information being collected. Mr. Niederholzer has added a “Rescue Treatment” to this year’s proposal and will continue to explore similar options. Additionally, he will be meeting with other prune researchers doing similar work in Europe at the upcoming International Society of Horticultural Sciences (ISHS) meeting.
- Exploration of Potassium Fertilization – There was a robust discussion on this proposal. The objectives were reviewed. There was clear demand for adding calcium (gypsum) as one of the treatments.
- Reducing Canker Development on Wounds Post Hedge... – Mr. Niederholzer provided input from the scientific review process on this project. Mr. Niederholzer and Mr. Bagley will work together in the communication of this feedback and any necessary project changes with the Principal Investigator.
- Drying – for both of the drying project proposals it was clear from the committee that there was real need and interest, but that these researchers needed to stay closely aligned with operators in the field. Mr. Bagley and Mr. Zea committed to ensuring a workgroup/subcommittee comes together for this need.

**On a motion by Mr. Kennedy and seconded by Mr. Wohletz, the Committee unanimously recommended that the Board approve the 2024 production research proposals at full funding level, including the varietal selection funding request, for a total of \$556,873 as presented.**



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**5. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATEGIC WORKGROUP – VARIETAL PROGRAM AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

Mr. Bagley reminded the members about the formation of strategic workgroups on the varietal program and on energy efficiency, mentioned previously at the December Research Conference. He will work with Mr. Obenauf and Mr. Zea to assemble these workgroups and will reach out to those who have expressed interest in participating on one or both of them.

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**6. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the Crop Management & Sustainability Research Committee of the California Prune Board adjourned at 11:53am PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES of the MEETING**  
of the  
**GOVERNMENT & ISSUES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
of the  
**CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Thursday, February 8, 2024, 10:00am PT  
California Farm Bureau Federation, 2600 River Plaza Drive, Centennial Rm, Sacramento, CA 95833

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Government & Issues Management Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Dan Bozzo  
Nick Cubre  
Brendon Flynn  
Tom Jones  
Maxwell Norton  
George Sousa, Jr.  
James Strong  
Greg Thompson  
Mike Vereschagin

**Members Absent:**

None

**Guests:**

Zach Bagley, Jaswant Bains, Jazmine Dawson, Kiaran Locy, Gary Obenauf, Barbara Patterson, Becky Poland, Jared Ruggles, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Flynn called the Government & Issues Management Committee meeting to order at 10:00am. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC/CHAIR COMMENTS**

Mr. Zea asked members to articulate what activities the Board should be involved in which have direct feedback/impact to the industry. This Committee should reaffirm and redefine what it wants the Board looking at and where it wants to spend time and effort. This program's budget is well-positioned now, but if opportunities or challenges arise that need addressing, adjustments to the budget can be proposed.

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**3. FEDERAL POLICY**

- Torrey Advisory Group - Issues Briefing/Discussion – Ms. Patterson discussed the political landscape in Congress, noting the significant disconnect between party leadership and members, which has led to a breakdown in the usual process of bill movement. She highlighted the weakening of control held by committee leadership, which has created opportunities for individual members to influence the conversation. There are challenges faced by Congress in passing bills, specifically the Appropriations Bill, due to disagreements and policy differences. Upcoming deadlines for various bills and requests were noted, including the FY24 funding transition. The discussion touched on potential future legislative activity, such as tax cuts and reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Ms. Patterson concluded by noting the challenges faced in the Farm Bill due to disagreements between Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and the potential for relationship building in coalitions.

Ms. Patterson discussed recent trends and shifting policies in agriculture, noting movement away from expensive initiatives due to economic pressures. The failure of the Farm Bill has been attributed to conflicts

over Covid-era investments. Ms. Patterson expressed uncertainty about future policy direction, particularly regarding bipartisan bills. The status of a bipartisan bill was discussed, with concerns raised over lack of active negotiation and funding for research. She expressed uncertainty about when more funding would be available. She also touched on trade programs like MAP, the impact of Covid spending and the Reinvestment Act on the Farm Bill, and labor issues in the U.S. and Mexico. Lastly, government purchases, advocacy for WIC programs, and ongoing trade issues, particularly tariff and non-tariff barriers were discussed.

The group discussed the progress of their Nutrition Research Roadmap, which is set to be presented to the Nutrition Research Committee in March. Ms. Patterson's expertise in the field was recognized, along with her relationships with research organizations that provide federal funding. A women's bone health study idea suggested by Mary Jane de Souza from Penn State was shared with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and CPB is optimistic about the potential opportunity. Ms. Patterson also mentioned the comments submitted by CPB to the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee referencing the growing evidence of prune consumption and bone health. The team also discussed the potential changes in nutritional focus within the USDA under different administrations and the impact of policy shifts on the National School Lunch Program and SNAP programs. The conversation concluded with a discussion on the importance of sustainability and nutrition in our products, the potential for relationship building with stakeholders, and the possibility of working with other industries to secure additional funding.

- 2024/25 CPB Federal Priorities were identified as:
  - Export market and research funding procurement
  - Government purchases procurement
  - Farm Bill (trade, nutrition, research)
  - Ag energy
  - Regulatory
  - Transition
- DC Spring Trip – The 2024 trip is planned for May 20-22, 2024. Mr. Zea will be reaching out to members who might participate this year.

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#### 4. STATE POLICY & ISSUES DISCUSSION

Mr. Zea discussed the Board's focus on both federal and state levels of work, with a more selective approach at the state level. He highlighted the Board's relationships with CDFA, our involvement in specialty crop grants, and representation in various state committees. Mr. Zea also emphasized the importance of fostering relationships, both within the industry and with their contacts.

- 2024/25 CPB State Priorities – Issues that are important to the Board at the state level include:
  - Ag energy
  - Regulatory
  - Research (UC/CSU)

One of the ways where advocacy takes place at the state level is by participation on committees. Mr. Bagley and Mr. Obenauf each sit on several committees, as does Mr. Zea, who now also sits on the Enforcement Committee which is part of the Executive Committee of CDFA.

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#### 5. DFA REPORT

Mr. Jones, from Safe Food Alliance led a discussion around Produce Safety Rule requirements, noting that they have tried to obtain an exemption for prunes, which unfortunately falls under the same category as fresh plums. The process that prunes go through should be lethal to pathogens and therefore should not fall under the same category as fresh fruit. Evidence was provided to the FDA via letters written by the Safe Food Alliance and submission of a lab study by the Prune Board. But the FDA wants more information and have requested additional information around pH levels and the characteristics of our product, including an industry-wide study showing that kill steps are practiced industry-wide. The Board would likely need an industry-funded study in order to

pursue this. Mr. Zea asked the growers if they had noticed any major difference in their reporting responsibilities since enforcement began. They indicated that there was little to no change for them. Mr. Jones didn't think that prunes were high on the CDFA's list of crops where they are enforcing the Produce Safety Rule. For now, this issue will not be pursued further.

Mr. Zea thanked Mr. Jones for his assistance in finding a contact at FDA to find a solution to the pitting tolerance specification currently identified in the USDA Commodity Specifications for Dried Fruit. The original Defect Level rule was established through FDA and included in the USDA manual. However, any changes will need to be led by FDA. Mr. Zea has reached out to begin the process.

Mr. Zea also mentioned an issue that recently arose, where a China-owned company failed to identify sulfites on their prune packaging. CPB staff went into monitoring mode, but this issue did not go any further. Mr. Obenauf mentioned that 50 years of data in the prune industry should help to defend against any claims that could arise.

**6. COALITIONS REVIEW**

Mr. Zea listed the coalitions that the Board partners with, emphasizing the importance of involvement in effective coalitions, such as the Ag Exports Count Coalition, the California Dried Fruit Coalition, Minor Crop Farmer Alliance, and the California League of Food Producers.

Mr. Obenauf mentioned another coalition for consideration – the Crop Protection Coalition (CPC). He noted that the Board successfully worked with them years ago. Mr. Bagley confirmed that the Minor Crop Farm Alliance did not have the capacity to work on everything, such as the Rodenticide issue, and felt that there was room for more organizations to be working on our behalf. A decision was made to recommend adding CPC to the Board's coalitions list, starting at an Affiliate level of membership. This addition to the budget totals \$1,000.

**7. COMMITTEE PROGRAMS BUDGET REVIEW**

Mr. Ruggles reviewed the 2024/25 proposed budget:

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>2021/22 Actual Expenses</b>	<b>2022/23 Actual Expenses</b>	<b>2023/24 Projected Expenses</b>	<b>2024/25 Proposed Budget</b>
<b>Coalition Expenses:</b>				
Ag Exports Count	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
CA Dried Fruit Coalition	8,000	-	2,500	5,000
CA Specialty Crops Council	7,000	7,000	7,350	7,500
Minor Crop Farmer Alliance	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b>Total Coalition Expenses</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>11,850</b>	<b>14,500</b>
<b>Other Expenses:</b>				
Federal Government Relations	86,683	90,860	90,000	90,000
Pesticide Survey	44,190	44,190	44,500	44,500
MRL Monitoring	10,400	10,400	10,920	10,920
Miscellaneous	95	-	-	580
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>	<b>141,368</b>	<b>145,450</b>	<b>145,420</b>	<b>146,000</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>158,368</b>	<b>154,450</b>	<b>157,270</b>	<b>160,500</b>

On a motion by Mr. Norton and seconded by Mr. Dan Bozzo, The Government & Issues Management Committee recommended that the Board approve the 2024/25 proposed budget as present, with an additional \$1,000 for the Crop Protection Coalition, for a total of \$161,500.

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**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Locy notified the group that an industry communications plan has been started and that staff has identified a library of topics, with accompanying messaging, which will be kept up to date. This messaging consists of generalized language but provides members with a toolkit from which to work. Ms. Locy suggested that members reach out to her if they want more information.

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**9. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the Government & Issues Management Committee of the California Prune Board adjourned at 12:04pm PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
of the  
NUTRITION RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
of the  
CALIFORNIA PRUNE BOARD**

Tuesday, March 7, 2024 10:00am PT  
3001 Douglas Blvd, First Fl Conference Rm, Roseville

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Pursuant to notice duly given, a meeting of the Nutrition Research Committee of the California Prune Board was held at the time and place noted above.

**Members Present:**

Dan Bozzo  
Tony Gerst  
Sandra Mitchell  
Katelyn Salzburger  
Joe Turkovich  
David Wohletz

**Members Absent:**

None

**Guests:**

Jazmine Dawson, Andrea N. Giancoli, Kiaran Locy, Olivia Lucanie (Torrey), Barbara Patterson (Torrey), Becky Poland, Jared Ruggles, Greg Thompson, Donn Zea

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Gerst, Chair of the Nutrition Research Committee called the meeting to order at 10:02am PT. A quorum was present.

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**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS / DESIRED OUTCOMES OF MEETING**

Chairman Gerst welcomed the members and guests. He acknowledged the volume of pre-reads that everyone reviewed for this meeting, noting that today's discussion should be robust.

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**3. CURRENT PROJECTS UPDATE**

Ms. Giancoli reminded the group that an update on the current projects was provided in the pre-reads. She addressed a couple of questions before moving to the pending projects update.

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**4. PENDING PROJECTS UPDATE**

Ms. Giancoli confirmed that the first two projects below had been approved at the last Nutrition Research Committee meeting. The 3<sup>rd</sup> project below, the Japan Clinical Trial, will be discussed during a later agenda item.

- De Souza/Rogers Biobank
- Cao/Weaver Calcium
- Japan Clinical Trial

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**5. 2023/24 – 2026/27 BUDGET UPDATE**

Mr. Ruggles reminded the group that the 2023/24 – 2026/27 budget update was provided in a pre-read. There were no questions or comments.

## 2023/24 – 2026/27 Research Program Budget Review

Study (\$K)	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Japan Research Advisement	\$20	--	--	--
Prebiotic/Biobank/De Souza	\$168	\$168	--	--
Calcium Utilization Study/Cao	\$100	\$125	--	--
Mitigate Hormonal Contraceptives/ Hooshmand & Kern	\$73	--	--	--
Manuscripts & Presentations/De Souza	\$37	--	--	--
Manuscript: Colon Cancer Protection/Turner	\$13	--	--	--
Food Survey Audit/Lemay	\$7	--	--	--
Fecal Transplant/McCabe	--	\$48	--	--
Prevention of Glucocorticoid Induced Osteoporosis/ McCabe	--	\$25	--	--
Sample Packs/Other	\$25	\$20	\$20	\$20
Total Expenditures	\$443	\$386	\$20	\$20
Budget Guidance for Committee Planning	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
Rollover Budget from 22/23	\$371			
Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$328	\$342	\$722	\$1,102
Covered by rolling 3 year "Agreement in Principle"				

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### 6. NEW RESEARCH REVIEW: COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

- Nutrition Research Roadmap Status Review – Ms. Giancoli acknowledged that much has been accomplished against the roadmap, but noted that there is still more to do. Progress is being made on most of the recommendations. Today’s conversation is centered around the future considerations listed on the roadmap.

Focus area 1 Expand the evidence about prunes and healthy bones: *Addressing the gaps from the current body of evidence:*

NRR Recommendation	Research Completed/Underway/Pending/Under Consideration
1. Conduct clinical bone health studies of unexplored life stages, demographics and other bone health-related conditions	Hooshmand: Young women 18-25 y.o. on hormonal contraceptives - <b>underway</b>
	Arjmandi: Men's study (USDA funded) - <b>completed</b>
	New demographic Hispanic – <b>under consideration</b>
2. Conduct international clinical research	Clifton/Kim: South Korea PM women - <b>completed</b>
	Japan clinical trial - <b>under consideration</b>
3. Utilize epidemiology and other surveys to aid discovery	Lemay: Evaluating food frequency datasets audit - <b>completed</b>
4. Confirm prune effect on bone separate from calcium, vitamin D and dairy	NAP recommendation - <b>unnecessary</b> , dairy & prunes ought to be additive; NAP instead recommended to conduct the calcium utilization/kinetics study • Cao/Weaver agreement for calcium study is in process - <b>pending</b>
5. Conduct clinical investigation to establish prunes as a food-based solution during a needed “drug holiday”	NAP recommendation - lower priority and likely unnecessary as, in effect, has already been done with the current clinical research
6. Conduct a glucocorticoid clinical trial	Pilot study - <b>Under consideration</b>
7. Evaluate the body of evidence via systematic reviews/meta-analysis	NAP feedback - need at least 7 published to warrant a literature review of the prune-bone body of evidence

**Focus area 2** Identify a gateway to the gut-bone axis/connection: *Investigate California prunes' prebiotic and anti-inflammatory activity:*

NRR Recommendation	Research Completed/Underway/Pending/Proposed
1. Conduct <i>in vitro</i> fecal fermentation studies	<b>Unnecessary</b> as preclinical studies have been either completed, are underway, pending or proposed – see research under recommendation 2
2. Conduct preclinical feeding studies as initial <i>in vitro</i> outcomes indicate	Smith: Prebiotic due to carbohydrate and polyphenols - <b>completed</b>
	Gallaher: Prunes increased beneficial short chain fatty acids in gut correlated to decreased body fat indicating potential prebiotic activity – <b>completed - RESULTS CONFIDENTIAL!!!</b>
	McCabe fecal transplant study - <b>underway</b>
	McCabe on-off-on pilot <b>underway</b> ; microbiota and gut function - <b>under consideration</b>
3. Conduct short-term clinical feeding trial to investigate any presence of a prebiotic prune-positive effect on gut inflammation and bone biomarkers	Rogers/De Souza Critical Expansion of The Prune Study to Enhance CPB's Nutrition Roadmap: Leveraging the Biospecimen Biobank from The Prune Study - <b>pending</b>
4. Conduct a larger sample and longer duration clinical feeding trial to measure bone health outcomes over time	Rogers/De Souza Biobank study completed and determine if longer study is necessary

- Trans/perimenopause Proposal – National Institute of Food and Agriculture Funding Opportunity – We are working with NIFA to adjust the funding date. Mr. Zea is pleased to see that the Board is getting its foot in the door with USDA/NIFA, with whom we have not yet worked. This could lead to other important opportunities.
- On-off Study – Dr. McCabe was awaiting samples from Dr. DeSouza to do the fecal transplants. This study has not yet been funded. Dr. McCabe is also going to pilot a human study portion of this to determine the effects of consuming prunes consistently, versus having breaks in consumption. The pre-reads indicated that if she has positive reports from this pilot, Dr. McCabe could apply for outside funding. These studies will be short, a maximum of two years, with a price tag that seems commensurate with the study.
- Glucocorticoid Clinical Trial – Dr. McCabe suggested a shorter trial, but she would have to determine which type of user would be the most ethical to invite into this study. So, instead she suggested a pilot study that could run at the same time as the on-off study, for an additional \$200k.
- New Population Demographic – A Hispanic audience has been recommended for this study. This study was scored comparatively low because of the expense (another large clinical trial, around \$1M-\$1.5M for 12 months).
- Japan Clinical Trial – The concerns regarding this study were articulated in the pre-reads, leading to the low score recorded below. After contacting ~60 researchers, none were confident in the success of this project. It was rated low due to all the identified challenges.

**Research Criteria Score Card**

Research Criteria Score Card Scores include: 1 (Low); 2 (Medium); 3 (High)							
RESEARCH RECOMMENDATION	RESEARCH SUCCESS CRITERIA						TOTAL SCORE
	FEASIBLE	OWNABLE	IMPACTFUL	COST EFFICIENT	TIMELY	CONSUMER MESSAGING	
1. Trans/Perimenopause Prevention Study - \$1.5 million Note: 50% of budget covered by National Institute of Food and Agriculture	3	3	2.75	3	3	2	16.75
2. On-Off-On Study - \$342,000	3	3	2.5	3	3	2	16.5
3. Glucorticoid Clinical Trial -	3	3	2.5	2	2	2	14.5
4. New Population Demographic -	2	3	2.5	2	2	2	13.5
5. Japan Clinical Trial - \$1 million +	1	3	2.5	1	2	3	12.5



Recommended Research Projects to Fund:

Study (\$K)	FY23/24	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Trans/perimenopause/NIFA	--	\$750	--	--
On-off-on Study/McCabe	\$86	\$170	\$86	--
Total Cost of Committed Research	\$443	\$386	\$20	\$20
Total Expenditures	\$529	\$1,306	\$106	\$20
Budget Guidance for Committee Planning	\$400	\$1,064	\$400	\$400
Rollover Budget from Previous Year	\$371	\$242		
Cumulative Unspent Budget	\$242	\$0	\$294	\$674
Covered by rolling 3 year "Agreement in Principle"				

Mr. Zea suggested that the following decision matrix be used in order to determine funding priorities for the recommended research:

- 1) Recommend the NIFA study as #1 and the On-Off-On study as #2, in that order of priority; and,
- 2) The NIFA study recommendation is included with the understanding that the amount and timing of the single payment is only possible if the EC/Board in the upcoming March meetings agrees to fund the study with the required timeframe from the current budget, while agreeing to include a one-time (one budget cycle) assessment (amount TBD) that would support payment of the NIFA 50% requirement; and,
- 3) The NRC will recommend this study knowing that two things could occur: i) The EC and Board do not agree to the assessment, and as a result only the On-Off-On study will be recommended; or ii) only the NIFA study will be recommended, and the On-Off-On study will be either postponed to a future cycle or determined to not be worthy of funding.

The members held a discussion about the identified financial constraints and potential solutions, including the possibility of increasing assessments by 10% for one year (using the current assessment formula) to cover the Board costs for the NIFA proposal. The members unanimously agreed to recommend the following to the Board:

- The **Trans/perimenopause NIFA** study is the 1<sup>st</sup> priority IF a budgetary solution can be identified. If the budget for the NIFA study is approved at the March 21<sup>st</sup> Board meeting, then the On-Off-On study will be delayed.
- If the NIFA study is not approved for funding at the March 21<sup>st</sup> Board meeting, then it will not be pursued at this time and INSTEAD, the two McCabe studies will be funded (i.e., **On-Off-On Study AND the Glucocorticoid pilot studies**).
- The **New Population Demographic** study was not prioritized in the current round of funding.
- The **Japan clinical trial** will no longer be pursued at this time.

Members of the Nutrition Research Committee will be notified of the Board’s decision on this matter immediately following the March 21 meeting.

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## 7. NUTRITION RESEARCH ROADMAP: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The two key areas of focus for the nutrition research program remains:

- Expand the evidence about prunes and healthy bones (addressing the gaps from the current body of evidence), and
- Identify a gateway to the gut-bone axis (investigate California Prunes’ prebiotic and anti-inflammatory activity).

Mr. Zea recognized the progress that has been made on the nutrition research roadmap and suggested that the NAP could be engaged to assist in the further development of nutrition research priorities.

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**8. NAP 2024/25 OFFSITE**

Mr. Zea suggested that there is value in including other Committee Chairs (such as Marketing and Export) and the Chairman of the Board, in the next NAP offsite. The “knights” would benefit from witnessing the deliberation that takes place around this research program. The group agreed, but also acknowledged that the next offsite might need to be postponed for budgetary reasons.

- Jeff Blumberg Retirement – Dr. Blumberg’s last day in his NAP role was February 29, 2024. He provided invaluable advice to the NAP during his tenure and helped to significantly move forward the progress of the nutrition research program. It was suggested that his replacement should be an expert in bone or the gut-bone axis. It will be key for the new member to be identified in time to participate in the next offsite.

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**9. DIETARY GUIDELINES ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

Comments have been submitted to the Dietary Guideline Advisory Committee in January. This was included in the pre-reads for today’s meeting and is strictly informational today.

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**10. INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON NUTRITIONAL ASPECTS OF MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**

California Prunes will be the Platinum sponsor for this conference, taking place in San Diego on April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 1<sup>st</sup>. This is an international conference that takes place every three years. The objective of the Board’s participation is three-fold: 1) to increase the visibility of prunes among the research community, 2) to build up credibility for the relationship between prunes and bone health, and 3) to gain excitement and enthusiasm among the research community about the potential prunes have. California Prunes’ own Drs. De Souza, Hooshmand, and McCabe will present at this conference.

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**11. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting of the California Prune Board Nutrition Research Committee adjourned at 12:23pm PT.

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Respectfully submitted,



Donn Zea  
Executive Director