

**VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND
MARKETS (AAFM)
AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION BOARD (AIB)**

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: February 28, 2022

LOCATION: Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

Member	Present	Absent
Ayer, Clara	X	
Beckford, Roy	X	
Bradshaw, Terry	X	
Chamberlin, Jonathan	X	
Gandhi, Kanika	X	
Giguere, Cary	X	
Moore, Julie	X	
Ransom, Earl		x
Rebozo, Ryan	X	
Schubart, Steven	X	
Vose, Sarah	X	
Guests in Attendance		
Clarice Cutler (proxy for Julie Moore)		
Morgan Griffith		
Nat Shambaugh		
James Maroney		
Mike Bald		
Fred Putnam Jr		
Sylvia Knight		

Meeting called to order: 1:06 PM EST

Meeting adjourned: 2:31 PM EST

Announcements:

None

Business:

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. History of VPAC and the AIB
3. Overview of Legislative Mandate
4. Programmatic Updates
5. Group Operation Discussion
6. Planning for the Next Meeting
7. Public comment

1. Introductions

Cary Giguere – Director Public Health and Resource Management (PHAM) at AAFM has been with AAFM for 29 years, the majority of that time with the pesticide program. Designee for Secretary of Agriculture.

Dr. Roy Beckford – Associate Dean and Director of UVM Extension in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Has held the position for about 10 months. Fills the seat of a member from the UVM Extension Center For Sustainable Agriculture.

Kanika Gandhi – Agrichemical Section Chief with PHARM. Has been with AAFM for 2 years and has worked with legislature to form the AIB.

Sarah Vose – State Toxicologist, doing work evaluating risk of chemicals to human health. Designee for the Commissioner of Health.

Clarice Cutler – Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) representative participating on behalf of Secretary of DEC. The Agency is working to designate an appointee that will fill the seat of the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee.

Jonathan Chamberlin – Ag Retail with Bordeau Brothers. Fills certified crop consultant seat.

Clara Ayer – Family owned dairy farm. Fills the seat of an active farmer who is a member of an organization representing the conventional dairy industry.

Terry Bradshaw – UVM Assistant Professor and Director of Horticulture Research and Education Center. Also is an active apple grower. Fills the seat of active farmer who is a member of an organization representing fruit or vegetable farmers.

Steven Schubart – Owns wholesale grass fed beef business. Works for meat aggregation company out of Boston, and is a member of the Governor’s Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture. Fills the seat of an active farmer who is a member of an organization representing grass-based, non-dairy livestock farming.

Ryan Rebozo – Director of Conservation Science with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, with past experience at Rutgers Extension. Fills the seat of a member of an environmental organization that advocates for policy regarding the management or reduction of toxic substances.

Non-member Introductions

Nat Shambaugh - Berlin, VT retired chemist with AAFM

James Marony - Oliver Hill Farm Leicester, VT retired organic dairy farmer

Fred Putnam - Vermont Beekeepers Association Board of Directors, Brandon VT

Mike Bald – Got Weeds

Sylvia Knight - Earth Community Advocate

Morgan Griffith – Agrichemical Research and Policy Specialist with PHARM at AAFM. AIB note taker.

2. History of VPAC and the AIB

Before AIB there was Vermont Pesticide Advisory Council (VPAC), created in 1986 to reduce use and detrimental impact of pesticides in state. VPAC was disbanded last year in conjunction with the formation of the AIB. Another function of VPAC as reviewing Right-of-Way permitting. This permitting review process is not going away. Instead of VPAC review, the permit applications are being published for public comment and those comments will be compiled and brought to the Secretary before permit issuance.

Things are changing in Vermont agriculture, so we wanted to have a diverse range of expertise and stakeholders that can look at pesticide regulations holistically and see any unintended consequences of new proposed policy.

AIB has responsibility to issue a report at the end of each year outlining the topics and recommendations pertaining to emerging issues and prioritized by board members.

3. Overview of Legislative Mandate

What are we tasked to do?

Act 49 (6 V.S.A. § 4964)

(1) Review historic recommendations for pesticide reduction in the State and coordinate with existing work groups to avoid submitting to the General Assembly conflicting policy recommendations on the regulation of pesticides and farming.

(2) Recommend practices that reduce the use of and exposure to pesticides and synthetic fertilizers in order to protect soil biology, human health, and environmental health, including recommended targets to achieve the State goal of an overall reduction in the use of pesticides consistent with sound pest or vegetative management practices.

(3) Advise the Executive Branch and the General Assembly with respect to legislation concerning the use of agricultural pest control measures and integrated pest management.

For example, how can we use IPM and other pest control more efficiently?

(4) Recommend to the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets policies, proposed rules, or legislation for the regulation of the use of treated articles when the Board determines that use of a treated article will have a hazardous or long-term deleterious effect on the environment in Vermont, presents a likely risk to human health, or is dangerous.

(5) Recommend practices to reduce the use and generation of waste associated with plastic in farming.

(6) Incentivize farming practices that are looking to reduce the use and dependence on pesticides in their practices.

(7) Advise the Agency with regard to the regulation of plant biostimulants.

(8) Recommend studies necessary for the performance of its functions as established under this section.
Education and outreach with farmers

(9) Explore methods and standards for transitioning farmers to practices that reduce pesticide usage.

(10) Explore methods and standards for farmers to engage in carbon sequestration or mitigation.

(11) Review the seed traits of a new genetically engineered seed proposed for sale, distribution, or use in the State.

The AIB will replace the current Seed Board tasked with deciding if new genetic traits on seeds are appropriate for VT. A new technology in the pipeline is Enlist Duo resistant crops.

(12) Study and issue recommendations regarding the feasibility of the use of biodegradable plastics in agriculture and the promotion of the use of and production of biodegradable plastics and similar products in Vermont.

4. Programmatic Updates

- H.626 bill builds on previous work of the legislature with regard to the pollinator protection committee. That committee's report has many action items, the last and largest has to do with use of treated seeds. Legislature gave AAFM opportunity to develop best management practices for use of neonic treated seeds. To date we haven't been able to establish a link between treated seeds and pollinator impact.
- Another topic of importance is corn herbicides. We will invite Morgan to present surface water pesticide monitoring data at later date. We also work with pesticide disposal around the state and have a stringent pesticide enforcement program.

5. Group Operation Discussion

What is best practice for how our group operates?

(Members can email their thoughts to Kanika after the meeting as well to add to this discussion.)

TB – If we nominate a chair it would have to have close date. As a chair this could take a LOT of time, so I suggest AAFM prioritizes topics as they come through and takes chair responsibilities [RR agrees]

CG – yes AAFM can take on responsibility of facilitating meeting and group can decide the priorities from what gets handed to us.

CA – Is the plan to have in-person meetings in the future?

KG – yes! Hopefully the next one will be in-person.

SV – Does yearly report cover all topics outlined?

KG – It covers topics we get to. I would rather deep dive into a few rather than gloss over all.

SV – It will be helpful to see priorities of what we should have in the report and maybe see an outline. Then maybe divide into groups to conquer.

KG – I plan to send out a survey to find what is important to the members of the group. If there is an even split then we can decide if we do sub-committees. We can publish results of the survey for members of the public to see as well.

TB – There are tiers of issues worth considering:

- 1) acute issues pending legislation
- 2) longer term topics i.e. proposing a study

Would be beneficial to sort out those issues so have temporal priorities outlined.

CG – the topic of treated seeds is one example of a shorter time frame issue, whereas atrazine is longer term discussion. The group agrees that categorizing short and long term topics will help sort and priorities issues and efforts.

CA – I'm hopeful we can come up with good list of priorities to discuss as whole group, I'm concerned we would lose the benefit of the diverse expertise we have if we have to split up. [CG, RR, KG agree]

CG – The endangered species committee has different scientific advisory panels, which is a structure that we could utilize. For example, we could form a pollinator advisory panel if we choose to as a way to broaden our expertise as needed and call upon subject matter experts.

RB – I like the idea of broad spectrum approach. Extension can also bring in resources/technical expertise. But there might be some issues that sub-groups can tackle then bring back to whole group.

KG – We'll send the survey to get a sense of priorities of members, if we want to split short/long term topics, and do we want scientific advisory boards for technical expertise.

TB – I suggest tag in subject line so that emails don't get lost.

Group in consensus [AIB] will be in subject line of all communications.

Will communicate Per diem form from business office and also share presentation on neonic monitoring over last 5 years in next communication.

6. Planning for the Next Meeting

Will look to schedule meetings on Mondays. It is helpful to have the agenda posted a month prior to the meetings so there is adequate time to prepare.

7. Public comment

James Marony

Question: Reduce use of pesticide use is a relative term, is the group open to a complete ban of pesticides?

Response: We will have to discuss, have to get feet under us first before delving into that type of details

Sylvia Knight

Question: Will AIB be open to presentations from people with expertise?

Response: Yes, we would like to bring in subject matter experts to help inform decisions.

Question: Can we receive agendas so that we know when we would like to join and comment?

Response: Yes, we are getting website up and running and we have a list to contact with future public communications.

Question: Is the VPAC sharepoint webpage going to be archived and not lost?

Response: Yes, we will transition to AIB and create links to historic VPAC documents. AIB goal is to have increased transparency.

Question: Where do waste pesticides go? How are they disposed of?

Response: It depends. We currently have contracts with solid waste management districts for hazardous waste disposal. We also cost share with hazardous waste hauler to clean up unused pesticides. They get manifested and shipped as hazardous waste, potentially to incinerator.

Question: Are waste pesticides allowed to end up in landfill in Coventry?

Response: If they are household hazardous waste then they may, like bleach and citronella candles. If the materials are not classified as household hazardous waste then they largely go for incineration, of which the closest one is in NY. We can provide manifests for last few pesticide clean outs we have done to you.

Nat Shambaugh

Comment: Want to emphasize public notice and involvement, please be highly transparent. Email agenda, minutes, permit proposals. Encourage outside expertise in discussions. Get as much public involvement as you can. I'm interested in neonicotinoid treated seeds, please address as top priority. I'd be happy to make presentation to the AIB about neonic when appropriate. Please send survey to members of public as well.

Response: Yes we can.

Mike Bald

Comment: Make a pitch for public participation. Takes money out of pocket to participate. Suggest give people money to get there and participate. Only hear from people who can afford to be at the meeting.

Response: We can post recording of meetings so you will be able to attend at your convenience and you can email comments. It will be hard to find money to pay everyone to participate. We will make as transparent as possible.

Question: Can you look at the last 20-25 years of our pesticide usage data and create an overview, noting points along that timespan where big events happened, for example, tropical storm Irene? It would be an overview of pesticide usage of 20-25 years with events that influenced increase or decrease in usage.

Response: That is a great idea, we will look into it

Comment: I'm asking for specificity in the state because a blanket policy is not what we are looking for. For example, I don't want to have Franklin County solution imposed on Bennington County.

Response: Yes, there are times when blanket policy is appropriate and times when it is not.

RB – This shows how complex issues of pesticides are. A blanket approach to solutions is never going to be the fix because it is so complex.

TB – It's easier for us to digest information if we receive comments as a broader voice. I suggest soliciting input then bring to AIB. Find advocate groups to represent your voice so you don't have to attend every single meeting.

Action Items:

- All communications will have [AIB] in subject line
- Send Survey to members to gauge priorities, temporal categorization, and thoughts on having scientific advisory boards for technical expertise. Survey will also ask about scheduling next meeting. (Kanika Gandhi)
- Provide per diem paperwork from AAFM Business Office (Kanika Gandhi)
- Share presentation on neonicotinoid monitoring in Vermont surface waters over last 5 years (Cary Giguere, Morgan Griffith)
- Share manifests from last few pesticide clean-out contracts with Sylvia Knight (Cary Giguere & Kanika Gandhi)

