

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

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: April 11, 2022

LOCATION: 116 State St. Montpelier, VT / 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		
Dave Huber (proxy for Cary Giguere)		
Morgan Griffith		
Judy Bellairs		

Meeting called to order: 10:02 AM EST

Meeting adjourned: 11:30 AM EST

Announcements:

None

Business:

AGENDA:

1. Introductions
2. Housekeeping – per diem, scheduling the next 3 meetings, soil scientist, other questions/concerns
3. Overview of the State Pesticide Program
4. Survey Responses for Priority Areas
 - a. Treated Articles
 - b. Pesticide Reduction Policies
 - c. Program ideas to transition farmers to alternative methods of farming
5. Discussion – goals for the year based on survey responses
6. Next steps to accomplish goals (sub-groups, overview of current legislative initiatives)
7. Public Comment
8. Action Item Review/Questions/Comments

Housekeeping

Wendy Sue Harper was recommended as a Soil Scientist to contact to fill last spot on the board. TB will provide email contact.

Future meetings will be the 4th Monday of every month. Next meeting May 23. We will Keep the slot open every month, but may not meet every month. Goal to meet about 6 times this year, given that the first two meetings were more introductory in nature. Going forward the group could meet quarterly. Virtual option will always be available for AIB members, if necessary.

Survey Responses & Priority Areas & Discussion of Goals for the Year

During the last 5 years legislature has focused on chlorpyrifos, neonicotinoid, atrazine, glyphosate. Chlorpyrifos not as large of an issue in VT because of state and more recent federal actions.

Neonicotinoids come up continuously and is great topic for AIB to look into. Discussed options of inviting beekeepers to testify for the board

*ACTION: provide Kanika with names of beekeepers to reach out to.

Discussion about obtaining the research that beekeepers and others that have testified before legislature this session have referenced.

*ACTION: Kanika look up names of people who testified in Senate Agriculture on the topic.

Neonicotinoid issue to be discussed by AIB should focus on the use as treated seeds.

*ACTION: Kanika create a “cheat sheet” on neonicotinoid treated seeds with active ingredients – which active ingredients are registered for seed treatments.

The group should also hear testimony on native pollinators and beneficial insects and effect of neonicotinoids

*ACTION: Ryan will provide names to ask to testify to AIB

AIB has to survey farmers to understand concerns and topics for our board to research and make recommendations on. We need to design survey and determine objective of survey.

The group discussed that in order to not further burden farmers the survey should be solution focused instead of just identifying problems. The survey can provide a few options, alternatives or solutions and ask farmers for their preference or willingness to participate. Therefore, the survey results could provide support for AIB future recommendations.

We need to understand our recommendations and objectives before we design the survey. Surveying farmers will be a longer term goal (more than a year out).

The group discussed the options for disseminating the survey: Instead of Agriview, AIB can look into direct mailer with a precursor published in Agriview.

Participants may be more likely to fill out the survey if it is concise and meaningful and if someone is going to follow up directly. AIB recommendations should be focused on lessening the burden on farmers. There are options for broad based data capture to help with issue determination without surveying farmers, i.e. pesticide sales, usage, plastic sales, transaction based data.

Spending some time and resources on plastic disposal options would be beneficial for AIB, but need to look at if there are existing groups already looking at this i.e. Ag plastic working group stopped meeting last year (members consisted of farmers, solid waste districts, ANR, AAFM, etc)

AIB should ask former member(s) for recap so we can learn from what has already been done and pick up where they left off.

*ACTION ask Annie Macmillan about Ag plastic working group debrief at future AIB meeting.

The group discussed briefly the importance of focusing on plastic source too, not just disposal. Are their alternatives available? Plastic has many different uses depending on farming specialty. Bale wrap accounts for the majority of ag use plastic.

Short Term goals for AIB	Long Term goals for AIB
Treated seeds	Farmer Survey
Ag plastics	Plant biostimulants
Atrazine & Glyphosate	

Overarching goal is to reduce pesticide use. AIB agreed to use an incremental approach, aligned with IPM best practices. Also aligned on the goal to learn from past committees and working groups so AIB does not reinvent the wheel, or make contradicting recommendations.

Not many people interested in looking at plant biostimulants. Don't see as emerging issue, despite use. A lot of time those are used as alternatives to harsher options.

Pollinator protection committee discussion: Proposed development of BMP for the use of IPM with regard to neonicotinoid treated seeds. Restricted homeowner use was policy recommendation that did come to fruition.

The group discussed what we could learn from the relatively new neonicotinoid treated seed program in Ontario. Ontario neonicotinoid treated seed recommendations are to do a quantitative assessment before using treated seed (aligned with IPM principles). They have a consultant look through the records to provide a prescription of what is needed. VT doesn't have those 3rd party verifiers as a resource. Comparing to Ontario is beneficial because is similar climate to VT

*ACTION research how the Ontario program is going so far. Who is best to ask to present Ontario lessons learned from crops and bee health perspective? [Jon might be able to find contact].

The group discussed of there are other treated articles that deserve discussions, but was decided that neonicotinoid treated seeds is the most pressing topic.

Future meeting dates and proposed topics

May 23 – Neonicotinoid Treated Seeds

June 27 – Atrazine & Glyphosate

July 25 – Agricultural Plastics

Split meeting time between testimony and board discussion. Proposed meeting time for next meeting: May 23, 1-4pm.

Proposed Pesticide regulations updates public teams meeting Wed. 6/15/22 9am-12pm

Public Comment: None