

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
HELD APRIL 30, 2025, AT 3:00 P.M.
IN THE BOARDROOM OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

PRESENT:

Members:

Chaplain K. Santucci - Chairman
Ms. Suzanne Mayall - Deputy Chairman
Ms. Julie Greaves
Mr. Sam Fraser-Smith
Mr. Daniel Renaud
Ms. Toni Butz
Mr. Scott Tucker
Mr. McLaren Smith

Government:

Mr. Kirk Outerbridge – Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Works and Environment
Dr. Geoff Smith - Director
Ms. Claire Jessey –Principal Plant Protection Officer
Mr. Stewart Swanson – Consultant Agronomist

ABSENT/APOLOGIES:

Mr. Roger Pacheco
Mr. Albert Swan
Mr. Joey Weeks
Mr. Warren Brown (Farmers' Association (FA) Chairman

Mr. Tommy Sinclair – Agricultural Officer
Dr. Jonathan Nisbett – Chief Veterinary Officer

The Chairman welcomed the members and welcomed the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Works and Environment to the Board of Agriculture meeting.

1. Confirmation of Minutes:

The previous Minutes were accepted with no objections. Confirmed: Toni Butz, Seconded: Daniel Renaud.

2. Matters arising from previous minutes:

No matters arising.

3. Action Points from Previous Meeting

The Director confirmed that discussions are underway with Pacheco Farms and the hydrogeologist to discuss water access concerns, and he reiterated that any farmer with water related concerns can bring those to the hydrogeologist.

The Director noted that no feedback has been received yet from Board Members regarding the Conservation Management Plan process.

The Farmers Association confirmed that they have completed the alpha-chloralose proposal for presentation but have not made any progress on the updating of the Agriculture Strategy.

The Director and Permanent Secretary have met to discuss the Growy proposal, and he expects more will be learnt after the Growy/BEDC meeting following the Board of Agriculture meeting.

Director has not yet met with the Planning Department to discuss the Grow Local Proposal but expects to do so soon.

The Director will send a clean copy of the Agriculture Strategy to the Farmers' Association for them to review and provide updates.

Director spoke to Mr. Weeks at the Police Service and the DENR shooter Mr. Wright did receive his license. He also noted that the Botanical Gardens recently closed for chicken culling for two days for baiting and shooting. A total of 264 chickens were collected from the Botanical Gardens.

The Director will contact the feral cat people to discuss the implications of feral cat feeding stations on the feral chicken population.

The Director arranged a meeting with Marsh Folly representatives for a few Board members and farmers to discuss the potential for composted plant waste to be a suitable amendment for agricultural fields.

DENR fees for farmers were reviewed for potential elimination in support of food security. The only fees for farmers identified are for pesticide applications and for BCDs containing pesticide products. A proposal will be submitted to the Director for his consideration to remove or reduce these fees for farmers.

The updated grape and strawberry propagation material import conditions have been distributed to interested parties.

The memo for the DENR statement on organic production will be prepared for inclusion on the Government website.

4. Policy & Legislation:

No report.

5. Farmers' Association Issues:

The FA noted a concern regarding transfer of information when the Agricultural Officer, Tommy Sinclair, retires from the ASC. The Director confirmed that the ASC Manager position will be advertised shortly. The Director acknowledged that the replacement of the Agricultural Officer is critical. The Permanent Secretary noted that there may be some flexibility when someone is retiring. The Director will check with the HR representative for more information.

The FA requested an update on Marketing Centre progress. They noted a concern regarding low stock levels, pesticide room not complete, and the chill rooms repairs. The Director noted that two chill rooms are operating, one is not functioning, and one is waiting for Temperature Control to fix it and the parts are on order. It should be up and running in 2 – 3 months. A farmer voiced concern regarding storage of potatoes and carrots this season. The Director said he would move things along as fast as possible. He also reported that approval has been granted for a replacement forklift. He noted the pesticide room had been cleaned and painted, and the shelves had been delivered may be installed already. The PPPO confirmed that a container of pesticides has just arrived on island and should be unloaded now.

The Consultant Agronomist noted that a particular herbicide was approved for importation for the farmers but couldn't be imported by the farmers themselves. The PPPO noted that the ASC had been given an approval in the past, but the active ingredient was currently under review and being re-assessed for health concerns and awaiting final determination from the Health Department before any new applications could be approved. The PPPO will follow up with the Health Department to see where this process is and provide an update when information is available.

The BFA reported that they will be discussing local generic labelling and publishing wholesale prices at their next BFA meeting. Some board members thought publishing wholesale prices was

a good idea. The Consultant noted that many years ago he set and published the wholesale prices from the ASC. It was decided that this issue would be **discussed at a later day to determine** if the matter should be progressed or not.

S. Fraser-Smith presented the 'Alpha-chloralose Pilot Proposal' that the BFA have been developing. He underscored the local feral chicken problem, the current control methods and the limited existing resources. He walked the members through the attached proposal in detail for a pilot program to allow a limited number of farmers access to alpha-chloralose to bait and sedate feral chickens at their agricultural farms and then humanely euthanize them. The proposal would ensure that only trained farmers are using the product under strict protocols, and they would assume all liabilities.

The Director noted that the Board provides recommendations to the Minister, and this proposal should be **reviewed by the Board to confirm their position and provide** feedback. He noted that the DOH would be consulted as well. If approved, the proposal could be taken forward on a larger scale incorporating lessons learned or stopped. The PS recommended a public awareness program in advance of any implementation. Board members noted that even one-off catch will create negative momentum in the public. Members suggested more engagement to respond to some of the public comments but expected public backlash regardless. The PS noted that it should be made clear to the public that feral chickens are a serious problem, and this is what we are trying to do. The PPPO noted the necessity for a robust public reporting mechanisms including animal cruelty and with further information for the public. Members noted a shortage of capacity within the DENR already to deal with any complaints and manage the public's expectations. The Director suggested the Health Department may be able to engage as well as it is a public health pest also. S. Fraser-Smith noted that the issue was becoming bureaucratic and over-complicated and unfounded complaints or misinformation should not be catered to, but he noted care is required with the optics. He confirmed that the risk profile was low and commented that not much could go wrong and that he expected the worst-case scenario was a dove being sedated which should be balanced against the damage to the agriculture industry by not doing this.

S. Fraser-Smith continued with the presentation on human health, domestic animal and wildlife risks and potential impacts. In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Fraser-Smith noted that the sedative does not kill the birds, and it is not reported to cause pain but causes hypothermia. Most birds will recover by themselves or with care. He noted the critical requirement to monitor the application site for the duration of the session and that all sedated birds would be removed promptly and euthanized or collected for care if an off target catch. All uneaten bait would be collected at the end of the session.

Some members noted a requirement for clarification of some of the terms but did not disagree with the proposal as it currently was presented. S. Fraser-Smith requested emails from **any Member with their concerns or comments**. The Board Members agreed that the proposal should be submitted from the Board in its current form and that they support this proposal. The Director noted that approvals would be obtained from other government departments (Department of Health, Attorney General etc.). The Board suggested an **additional meeting to discuss this proposal further**.

6. Director's Report

No report (already discussed)

7. Agricultural Service Centre (ASC)

No report (already discussed)

8. Agronomy (Consultant Agronomist) report

The Consultant Agronomist discussed information in his latest newsletter related to calibrations of sprayers. He noted the importance calibrating spray equipment and correct pressure is an important component of that. He will recommend that the ASC carry the pressure regulators.

He reported that he had attended a meeting in Florida on autonomous equipment and new technologies. Most equipment is suitable for larger scale operations, but some smaller equipment is suitable for Bermuda. He showed images of computerized smaller spray units with cameras to distinguish between weeds and crop plants for spraying purposes. He also reported on computerized tractors that could be programmed to carry out spraying, cultivation etc. He discussed drone use for mapping crops that could then be programmed to only spray specific areas. Most drones have small tanks suitable for Bermuda leading to reduced pesticide use. He also referred to nozzles that output a larger droplet size which is preferable to reduce drift.

He noted his observation of the general weediness of fields in Bermuda. He noted that the use of plastic and correctly timed cultivation can significantly reduce weed pressure, and it was his opinion that this was the correct way forward. He also reported that UFL Plant Diagnostic Lab has a permit to import plants for disease diagnosis is required that he would investigate further.

9. Plant Protection Section:

Nothing to report

10. Veterinary Services:

Nothing to report

11. Planning Applications:

Nothing to report

12. A.O.B.:

The Chairman recognized the efforts of those farmers working in the industry, particularly those volunteering their time in the community, such as Gabre Swan and his wife volunteering at the Annual Exhibition.

Meeting Adjourned

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm. A presentation by BEDC and Growly representatives commenced upon the completion of the Board of Agriculture meeting

Chairman:



Date:

Aug. 30, 2025.