

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
HELD AUGUST 26TH, 2024 AT 3:30 P.M.
IN THE BOARDROOM OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

PRESENT: Mr. Warren Brown – Acting Chairman
Mr. Roger Pacheco Jr
Ms. Julie Greaves
Ms. Suzanne Mayall
Dr. Geoff Smith – Acting Director
Dr. Jonathan Nisbett – Chief Veterinary Officer
Ms. Claire Jessey –Principal Plant Protection Officer
Ms. Wendy P Woodley – Admin. Asst.
Mr. Stewart Swanson – Agronomist
Mr. Omari Dill – Trainee Agronomist
Mr. Sam Fraser-Smith

APOLOGIES: Mr. Tommy Sinclair – Agriculture Officer
Mr. Peter Drew – Terrestrial Conservation Officer
Mr. Joey Weeks

1. Confirmation of Minutes:

The Minutes of the June 19th, 2024 were confirmed. However, clarification is needed regarding the position on organic labelling.
The Minister sends his apologies as he was called into an Economic Meeting.

2. Introduction of new Trainee Agronomist, Mr. Omari Dill:

The Acting Chairman welcomed Trainee Agronomist, Mr. Omari Dill to the BoA meeting. Mr. Dill was hired for two years as the Trainee Agronomist on August 5th, 2024. He will be shadowing the Consultant Agronomist, Mr. Stewart Swanson. Mr. Dill studied Agronomy at Costa Rica University and graduated in 2006. Upon Mr. Dill's return, he started working at the Agriculture Service Centre with the Agricultural Officer, Thomas Sinclair for two years. Upon completion of the post, he returned to work in the field of landscaping, at Kaleidoscope and then 4 years at WindReach Facility working on their edible landscape project, community garden development and horticulture. Mr. Dill will be assigned some industry projects and will be working alongside the Agricultural Consultant. Mr. Dill will be based at the Agriculture Service Centre.

3. Matters Arising from previous minutes:

- a. Produce Labelling - The Principal Plant Protection Officer noted that wording of the DENR position on organic production/produce was still under discussion and will be clarified at the next meeting for agreement. S. Fraser-Smith noted that UK organic trademark does not extend to Bermuda.
- b. The Embargoed/Confiscated produce: The Principal Plant Protection Officer noted this is an issue to present to the Board but a proper report will be prepared for discussion in the near future.

4. Policy & Legislation:

a. Integrated Agriculture Strategy:

Crop Strategy – discussion:

The Acting Director confirmed that the Trainee Agronomist has been tasked with progressing the Integrated Agriculture Strategy with the Chief Veterinary Officer working on the animal component. S. Mayall noted that the goals needed to be updated for the next version and that the previous goals were high level and it was difficult to measure the output and get down into the details to determine if progress was made. She offered to assist with reviewing any of goals from the past version and for future versions. W. Brown noted that in spite of the strategy, land is still being lost and he questioned the accuracy of the Planning Department list of arable land and how much land is actually suitable for farming. The Acting Director confirmed that there was an up to date arable audit and the DENR GIS Mapping Analyst has the information. W. Brown noted that a buffer around agricultural land is essential. S. Swanson reported that there are so many fields that this task is overwhelming.

5. Farmers Association Issues:

- a. **Hurricane Ernesto:** Mr. W. Brown reported that the farmers lost a lot of produce during Hurricane Ernesto. One of the Farmers said he had lost \$50,000.00 worth of his banana and summer crop (peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, carrots) production. Farmers reported losses between \$500 - \$750,000.00. He noted that farmers were looking to create a sustainability fund or insurance that would give the farmers some sort of protection in the event of a bad hurricane. S. Fraser-Smith also noted concerns about the implications of the Pesticide Safety Act and the proposed regulations coming into force. He stated that the Pesticide Safety Act was too broad and asked whether small amendments could be made to the Act. There was discussion on the necessity for distinction between pesticide application on private or public land and homeowner use versus

commercial application. Some board members noted that some of the consultation questions were odd and not particularly helpful. C. Jessey reported that the online pesticide regulations survey questionnaire has now been closed for submissions but the farmers would be invited to attend a focus group to give their feedback on two areas of the proposed regulations to be drafted; importation and pesticide training. The invitation for this online meeting will come from the Department of Health and will take place in September.

- b. **Feral Chickens:** The farmers reported ongoing problems with feral chickens. These chickens are causing economic losses. One of the farmers mentioned placing chicken poison down on the farms to kill the chickens. DENR noted that the chicken shooter is on 6 weeks leave, the other shooter is out sick and the van for the third officer is at the government quarry undergoing repairs. Mr. Brown requested permission for farmers to put down the product themselves for chicken control as they are on site at their own properties. S. Fraser-Smith noted that a DENR officer does offer preferential trapping treatment to the farmers for chicken problems, but the farmers did not follow up with him. He noted that farmers are willing to undertake extra training to be able to have access to the anesthetizing chemical for chicken control.
- c. **The Potato Production:** Mr. Warren Brown reported that the potato and strawberry crops are not the staple crops for farmers as they used to be. Pacheco Farm reported years ago they used to sell about 400 bags of potatoes a week and now it has decreased to only 120 bags a week. He suggested that people are not eating as many carbohydrates as they used to.

6. Agronomy Update:

The Agronomist, Stewart Swanson reported that sweet potato yields are ultimately determined by the number of sweet potato plants per acre, the amount of irrigation at the critical root set period. Under commercial production conditions, fields with identical plant densities that remain in the field for the same time may have drastically different yields. This is likely due to factors that affect storage root initiation and development. Unlike the bulking of sweet potato storage roots in the last third of the growing season, sweet potato root number is determined early in the production cycle. Current research has found that environmental and cultural conditions during the first 2 weeks to 30 days after transplanting are critical in deciding the number of storage roots initiated per plant.

During Stewart's last trip he checked several sweet potato fields that were showing a lot of stress from the dry conditions that were present this spring. He noted that potential yields in these fields will be very low. Mr. Swanson discussed the reniform nematode populations in local fields and discussed the options available for control, including fumigants, plastic mulch and nematicides. Nutsedge weed control was also discussed as well as herbicides available to control this weed. There was discussion around Roundup (glyphosate) the study conducted by DENR, its costs and uses.

7. Plant Protection Lab update:

Nothing additional to report other than issues that were addressed earlier in the meeting.

8. Agricultural Service Centre

The Acting Director reported that repairs are underway at the Agricultural Service Centre. He mentioned 21 issues that need to be progressed, although unfortunately some work is on hold with W&E. W & E is currently working on the government schools and will address the issues at the Agriculture Service Centre in September. W&E will be doing an asbestos assessment in terms of working on the cracks that are present. Mr. Omari Dill is working closely with Kimberly Burch, the DENR Health and Safety Officer to progress some of the necessary improvements and maintenance at the ASC.

9. Veterinary Services update:

The CV Officer reported that Dr. White had visited the island 11th May 2024. He conducted a site visit to Westover and Greenland Dairy Farm and a brief discussion took place based on what they saw. Dr. White, an Associate Professor of Tuft's University school of veterinary medicine emailed his observation to the CV Officer. DENR had a summer student carrying out research on the US and European legislated standards for milk quality. The challenges still continue to exist on the farms.

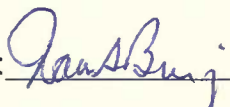
10. Planning Applications:

Nothing to report.

11. A.O.B.:

- a) A farmer noted some concerns regarding the availability of water for irrigation and reported that the rate per gallon is costly to the farmers. The farmers are requesting water during the summer months. It was noted that Minister Burch (Public Works) had reported previously that there will be no more digging up the roads. This suggested no new irrigation lines will be installed.
- b) One of the BoA members asked if the list of pesticides had been approved as yet and if so, can they have access to it.

There is no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Chairman: 

Date: 11-12-25