

PPIC Executive Board Meeting Minutes, Thursday, January 16th, 2020 8:30 – 10:00 am, FScN 225G

In attendance: Pam Ismail – UMN

Amy Mathiowetz – UMN

Jason Robinson – AURI, via Zoom

Christina Connelly – Canadian Consulate

Julie Simonson – Schwan's, Via Zoom

Denis Chereau – IMPROV, via Zoom

Stacy Pyett – Wageningen University and Research, via Zoom

Greg Cuomo – UMN

1. Quick re-cap of previous Executive Board meeting

2. Technical committee meeting minutes, FYI (*Appendix 2 of agenda*)

3. PPIC general updates

Objectives:

A. Happy first birthday, PPIC!

B. Update on Research Spotlight Meeting (Oct 17th, 2019): 105 attendees from 45 companies & organizations; keynote speaker: Julia Keppler, Wageningen University and Research; other speakers from our pool of PPIC researchers; several networking sessions, booths, and posters. Evaluation and feedback are in Appendix 3 of agenda
Feedback from Executive Board members who attended:

- **Julie:** overall very positive; would like to keep going deep on certain research areas and avoid repeating research year by year; poster session was good but crowded; in 2020 and at future meetings, continue to stay in tune with timely hot topics from research standpoint to attract interest (i.e. what's new in plant proteins research, what are companies/consumers interested in right now)
 - **Christina:** new information presented; heard a lot of feedback particularly related to Julia Keppler's (Wageningen University & Research) presentation (cutting edge work)
 - **Jason:** reiterating what Julie and Christina said; potentially entertain the concept of being able to kick off the meeting with a presentation of what's new/novel/different in the marketplace – where opportunities might be, what are the trends for the future?
 - *Pam's response:* research planning meeting in spring will focus more on research priorities/consumer trends driving our priorities
- Cash bar/social event was not well attended; too much at the end of a very busy day -- consider omitting next year

C. Update on PPIC-funded projects: first quarterly reports submitted Dec. 10th

- Both projects ongoing and on track with graduate students working on both
- Amy will send quarterly reports to Exec Board

D. Update on FFAR proposals: Two submitted

- Next Generation Crops; Title: "Develop Camelina and Pennycress Lines as Plant Protein Sources for Food Use via Accelerated Breeding

Methodologies”; Seven interdisciplinary researchers; Matching funds of \$327,332 for a total of \$654,663 (NOT FUNDED)

- Pam will eventually receive review of proposal/comments from FFAR as to why we did not get funded and can share those comments with the Exec board
- Plant Protein Enhancement Project; Title: “Legumes of the Future: Developing Methodologies and Germplasm to Enhance the Functionality and Nutritional Quality of Pea Protein”; Five interdisciplinary researchers; Funds requested: \$1,167,797 (PENDING)
 - No request for matching funds
 - Invited to submit based on direct call for plant protein enhancement
 - Will hear back in “Winter”
- E. Proposal to GFI: submitted pre-proposal and got invited to submit a full proposal; Title: “Characterizing and Texturizing Proteins from Pulses to Form Fibers with Textures that Mimic Chicken”; Three interdisciplinary researchers (Job – extrusion expertise; Zata – sensory; Pam – characterizing structure); Funds requested: \$250,000 (SUBMITTED)
- F. Other proposals/comments from Executive Board
 - Pam planning to put together USDA proposal (due in March); currently brainstorming projects
 - Missed deadline for MDA proposal this year but the goal is to apply next year
 - Greg remarked on how the research being done by PPIC is starting to leverage other funding in similar research areas (i.e. Forever Green funding for project Pam is on with Bob Stupar in genetics and genomics)
 - Julie remarked on the importance of ongoing communication to our members and industry regarding submitted proposals/funded research – as we start getting research going, this will generate excitement among current and potential members. We also have a nice range of research that can appeal to a variety of supporters, and we should take this into consideration in our communication strategy
 - In response to Julie’s comments, PPIC will begin adding proposal updates to our newsletters in addition to keeping technical committee (partner reps) updated

4. Efforts to recruit new members

Objectives:

- a. **Announcing new members:** Kellogg’s (Partner), Saputo (Partner), General Mills (Associate member; 1 year trial non-renewable), Benson Hill (Associate member), and Motif Food Works (Associate member). Currently at 12 members: 7 partners and 5 associates.
 - Change to PPIC bylaws: For Kellogg’s to join, we adjusted membership bylaws to state no animals will be used for PPIC-funded research; PepsiCo seems to be going in the direction of no animal use in research, as well

- To add value for companies trialing PPIC membership at associate level and to encourage them to sign at partner level after 1 year, PPIC is currently working on complimentary projects for these companies (GMI, Coca-Cola)
 - VP from Coca-Cola visited U and met with many groups; Pam had chance to talk to them about PPIC
 - 20% discount expired at end of year but discount will apply for 3 years to companies who signed within first year
- b. Announcing potential members** (agreement in progress): Danone at Partner Level; our representative from Conagra Brands, Clint Johnson, encouraged them to partner with PPIC.
- Reminder that goal was 15 members for first year
- c.** PPIC, including technical committee members, still working on getting interest from AGT, Roquette, PepsiCo, DSM, Givaudan, Firmenich, and others (review shared document for updates) – we do have follow-up emails out to contacts for these companies
- d. New thoughts and connections?**
- Hormel Foods: they have attended every PPIC event thus far
 - Julie -- Hormel is doing active work in plant proteins space
 - Dean Brian Buhr has been in contact with Hormel, and they been very supportive; Greg will pass on the message to Dean Buhr to continue to advocate for PPIC in his conversations with Hormel; there is a stipulation in place wherein Hormel Foundation can only give money to Mower County, which could be preventing membership
 - Impossible Foods: Pam has talked with their team and will reach out again
 - Just Foods – plant-based food company focused on egg substitutes; purchased a plant in central MN for co-packing; Jason working with Greater MSP to get a contact there
 - Buhler – visited their facility; offering in-kind support
 - STET – new dry separation technology; had a conversation with them on 11-8-19 – considering PPIC membership vs. fee-for-service; are willing to offer in-kind service; need to follow up
 - Novozymes developing plant protein team (North America, Europe, & China teams); several conversations – looking at function of enzymes for different plant protein applications; very interested
 - Pam will reconnect with Nadji Rekhif from Nestlé
 - Christina reminded us of Green Leaf Foods – plant-based subsidiary of Maple Leaf Foods; our contact is Dan Curtin – Pam will reach out
 - Have not heard anything more from Kraft Heinz (Boca Brand); unsure of interest level in PPIC; John Topinka was Julie’s contact; reached out to John, who referred us to Arica Baer and Tracy Sanborn – talked with them in May but have not heard anything since – Pam will follow-up
 - Tyson -- need contact; Julie knows a director of R&D but may not be in right group – Julie can follow-up; Denis talked briefly about PPIC with Reese Schroeder (Tyson Ventures Managing Director) in December and can reconnect

- Denis reached out to Gérald Casterou from Air Liquide and gave him a brief presentation on PPIC and Pam's contact information; Pam will re-connect
- Starbucks is getting into plant-based beverages
 - Greg – MN has a lot of support in other areas from woman who used to be VP of R&D; Mary Wagner (alumni of dept)– Greg can send email introducing us if we remind him;
 - Julie knows someone on quality side and can contact them if we do not make progress through Mary Wagner
 - Jason also has contact at senior manager level that can contact if others do not pan out
- Caribou – Midwest based; working with oat beverages; Christina will work on getting some contacts
- Daiya Foods – plant-based dairy foods; Christina has a contact that she can send to PPIC
- Merit Foods – new pea and canola processing facility being built in Winnipeg; former Manitoba Hemp leaders (one based in MN); Christina has a contact that she knows well – will reach out

5. Feedback after one year with PPIC

Objectives:

a. Share thoughts on PPIC experiences and value

- **Greg (University perspective):** PPIC offers terrific opportunity for connecting with people and leveraging funds from other places; when CFANS goes to DC, want them to associate U of M with certain initiatives (i.e. plant protein)
- **Christina:** expectation-wise, have fulfilled everything we said we would; would like to see update of brochure with all of members – useful in meetings;
 - Amy can mail PPIC postcards, etc. to all of Board members/partner reps so they can use in discussions
- **Julie:** so excited where this is going; focused on pre-competitive research that is early and novel for an industry that is evolving fast; everyone realizes we have so much to learn – the center is perfect for supporting research that will help drive this industry; PPIC is great advocate for plant protein space; communicating externally will continue to be of great importance for PPIC

It would be helpful to know of other research centers (beyond Wageningen and Improve) in plant protein space – so we are clear of what other activity is happening in the space and ensure what we are doing is different to stay competitive

- There is a group in Germany – German Institute of Food Technology
- Protein Institute of Canada – more of a funding entity; do not have research center; may be interested in Center but not likely a priority for them at this point
- Protein France (45 company members) -- Not working at scientific level; more lobbying to organize value chains and fund R&D initiatives but difficult for them to get the money

- Netherlands has Protein Competence Center (Stacy is General Manager; 9 partners; discussion platform that spins out projects; not a membership-based platform); how can we link with PPIC?
 - Sustainable Food Initiative (SSI) – startup phase for ~ 1-2 years; broader than proteins but with goal to make food systems more sustainable
 - Dutch govt working towards one unified Center of both Protein Competence Center and SSI – think about how can we best connect with PPIC
- **Denis:** PPIC generated 4 main goals and actively addressed these throughout the year
 1. Create an active community – successfully did so through our 2 events
 2. Generate scientific research – ongoing and will start to see results in 2020
 3. Training and educate students on plant-based protein topics
 4. Create momentum to generate funding to keep system working
 Recommend attracting more people to cover entire value chain from upstream to downstream; not just ingredients and formulation
 - **Stacy:**
 - Impressed with enormous job that this has been and the amount of contacts we've developed
 - In contrast to Denis' suggestion: Concern about keeping current partners happy in coming years; our current focus is on recruiting partners and growing, whereas we may be in a stage where we need to show current partners scientific value; Advice is to build cautiously and strategically add partners: We have about the number of partners we can make happy with the funding we have
 - PPIC is a research/networking hybrid; on research side, think about what we can deliver, what partners expect from us; on networking side, in coming year, what kind of mechanisms do we have for building trust across companies so they feel comfortable discussing needs/interests openly
 - Pam hoping pre-competitive research & collaborative discussion of needs at tech committee will help build trust
 - **Greg** – [Based on minutes from technical committee meeting] need clarification around companies' expectations and how they reacted to first year... unsure whether our partners expect more from PPIC based on what they are giving to Center OR whether it's expected that as members, part of their money will be used to leverage partners
 Pam: has not been explicitly stated that part of their membership dollars will be used to leverage additional funds but we can make sure this is communicated
 -Consider how we can best engage with companies regarding their expectations
 - **Jason:**
 - Credit for how PPIC has been able to pull everyone together and connect across organizations
 - Consider how we keep partner companies satisfied with money they are giving to Center; AURI does stakeholder analysis to assess stakeholder expectations; process could be similar for PPIC – how is mission being felt today among stakeholders and expectations for future – can follow up on this at later time.

6. Current funds – not including Schwan’s fellowship dollars

Objectives:

- a. **Provide an overview of current funds** (2018-2021: \$727,200, after 15% IDC: \$618,120 from membership dollars; remaining from first year after funding two \$50K projects: \$114,000; year two: \$202,000; total available in 2020: \$316,000)
- b. **Discuss potential use of funds currently available:** Fund two (maybe three) more \$50K projects in 2020. Timing of RFP in Spring 2020; Tech committee recommended to announce next RFP before upcoming research planning meeting (all priorities well-developed and still valid)
 - RFP out by end of January/beginning of February with March deadline; dispense money in June;
 - Greg: encourage assertiveness with funding proposals rather than taking a conservative approach – ultimately will generate more money on the backside
 - Only open to researcher cohort (20 researchers)
 - Stacy: pre-competitive challenges are big challenges that 50K may not be enough to address; do we require deliverables in terms of additional funding from applicants/how they are leveraging funds?(If we require this as a deliverable, this will also provide information on other funding sources out there that we may be unaware of)
 - Pam: 50K per year is reasonable support to cover 1 grad student & supplies; long-term can be broken into phases over years
 - PPIC will add to RFP – expectation is that information gained from grant will be used to leverage funds from outside sources. Leveraging funds will also be added to the evaluation criteria

7. Address short term goals

Objectives:

a. Review goals:

- Goal was to reach 15 members by end of inaugural year; we are now at 12; add 10 more members in the second year?
 - Growing cautiously vs. continuing momentum in adding more members
 - Julie: current 12 members are more on food manufacturer side; what do we want as a balance/who do we want to appeal to across value chain OR do we want to focus in on specific area
 - Christina: if we expand in breadth of value chain, need to expand diversity of research as well (do we have the funds for that)? Long-term, breadth of membership would be good; 10 more is not too much but is good to recognize that they will not all be from manufacturer side
 - Stacy: strategic choice of what type of companies we want; letting companies know that we have strategically decided that we specifically want them on board based on who current member companies PPIC wants on board – bring this to next technical committee meeting
- Increase pool of funds to reach \$1,000,000 by mid-2020

- Continue with short term projects for the first two years.

b. Discuss changes/additions

1. Strategic addition of members; i.e. growing cautiously while specifically selecting which companies/type of companies would add to the breadth of our membership cohort and cover the value chain from upstream to downstream
2. Improve on external communication to our partners and beyond (industry)
 - i. Identify communication goal of PPIC, beyond what is happening in research
3. Brainstorm how PPIC can continue to satisfy current members

8. Research Planning meeting

Objectives:

- a. Discuss Spring 2020 research planning meeting timing (suggested date April 30 2020)
 - AOCS ends April 29th -- may lose some people and Pam will be at AOCS. Consider new date
- b. Review structure of the meeting: presentations from industry and organizations for first half of the day, round table discuss (revisit) research priorities second half of the day, with several networking opportunities.

9. Next steps – ran out of time to address during conference call

Objectives:

- a. Advertise the research planning meeting to attract broad range of attendees (target: 80-100 attendees), opportunity to grow interest in PPIC
- b. Focus of next meeting?
- c. When should we meet next?

10. Post-Meeting Action Items

- Follow-Ups
 - Hormel: Greg to follow up with Dean Buhr to address PPIC during next conversation with Hormel
 - Just Foods – Jason working to get contact through Greater MSP
 - Impossible Foods, Buhler, STET, Novozymes, Nestle, Kraft Heinz – Pam to follow up with our contacts
 - Greenleaf Foods – Pam to reach out to Dan Curtin, contact that Christina provided
 - Tyson – Julie will reach out to Director of R&D; Denis will reconnect with Reese Schroeder (Managing Director, Tyson Ventures)
 - Air Liquide– Pam to reach out to Gérald Casterou, contact that Denis provided
 - Starbucks – Greg will write introductory email to Mary Wagner; Julie can reach out to her contact on quality side and Jason to his contact at senior manager level if needed
 - Caribou – Christina will work to get a contact there

- Daiya Foods – Christina will send her contact there to PPIC
 - Merit Foods – Christina will reach out to her contact there
- Amy will send quarterly reports to Exec Board
- Pam will work on updating the PPIC goals in consultation with our partners, and Amy will send out the updated goals
- Pam/Amy will update next RFP and evaluation criteria to include the deliverable of how the applicant will leverage their funds
- Pam to complete formal paperwork to be considered a “Center” by CFANS, Greg will help with connecting us with the right people.
- Pam/Amy and Jason will reconnect regarding a stakeholder analysis to formally analyze the satisfaction of PPIC members
- Pam will add to the technical committee agenda to ask partner companies what companies they would like to partner with (as part of the goal to strategically add companies and satisfy our current members). Based on today's conversation, Pam will also explicitly communicate to tech committee representatives that part of their membership dollars will be used to leverage additional funds
- Greg mentioned that the Invasive species group – MITPPC -- (Heather Coop) (MITPPC) – on campus directs their Center well and could be a good resource to reach out to.