

Directors Meeting Update - July 2024

Update for Members:

We had our latest Directors meeting on July 9, 2024.

Deferment Update - Farmers are largely complete in their efforts to pay off their Deferment. The next step is for the attorney to provide copies of the signed agreements to the farmers.

Harvest - High harvest costs and culm rates are creating huge anxiety with the farmers and harvesters. Most farms have begun shooting over the last few weeks but it varies by farm. In some places the harvests have been high. Rick Turner will lead an effort to visit the Packinghouse with Ben Norris and harvesters to see visually what is being culled and how this relates to our prior industry experience. This is a time when we should expect costs to be coming down due to higher volume and improved crew experience but the opposite is happening due to concerns over controlling the abnormally high cull rates.

Mechanical Harvesting for Wood - Michael Rogers who runs the UF-IFAS Lake Alfred facility has suggested that IFAS could take on a project to develop mechanical harvesting for wood, utilizing UF engineers. The goal is to develop an easy pathway for harvesters to obtain effective equipment, like that being used in forestry but on a smaller scale. The Directors asked Michael Rogers to please move forward with this effort.

Finances and Membership - We have just over \$7,600 in the bank and expected remaining expenses of \$7,600 between the Key Project and Marketing. We anticipate additional funds as Members pay their dues renewals (72% have paid so far). Membership is up 21% with 87 Members.

Annual Meeting Planning - Peter Chaires explained our communications plan and progress on developing sponsors. In August we will firm up our agenda and speakers.

Research Planning for 2024 -

- Key Project - the initial baseline data is running behind schedule for but we expect this to be resolved with our end of June data which will include the first new culms. This remains our most reliable way of understanding production and profitability for farms long term.
- SWFWMD meeting - several directors will meet with the Southwest Florida Water Management District on 7/24 to develop a working relationship with benefits for both sides - SWFWMD - better understanding of bamboo farming water use needs and Farmers - better and more predictable permitting process.

Marketing Plans - Marketing efforts continue as Ambar develops our Member Spotlights for members that may be our future markets, the latest being National Bamboo.

- Bamcore - we are providing sample culms for testing. We have a meeting with Bamcore on 8/9 to discuss further how our industry can fit as a potential supplier.
- Wanda - our largest farmer shared their development of a product to be marketed from bamboo as water filtering. This is wonderful as it is relatively complete and making clean water at my home!
- Bamboo as energy - we are working to perform a combustibility test on the bamboo wood to help a member determine if our wood can be developed for the energy market.

Next Meeting - set for August 8th at 11am at CREC UF-IFAS Lake Alfred.