

## Summary of How Reviewers Comments were Addressed

1. **“Outputs primarily targeting AAEEA and FDRS. Would like to see other regional outlets, such as SAEA and WAEA.”**

A/ On page 18 of the revised proposal, we added other annual meetings where S-1067 members will be presenting project findings:

“In addition, members also frequently participate in the annual meetings of other groups such as that for the Southern Agricultural Economics Association, the Western Agricultural Economics Association, the International Association for Food Protection, the Food Safety Consortium at which findings derived from the S-1067 project results may also be presented.”

2. **“Objective 3 activities could also be supported with references, like in Objectives 1 and 2.”**

A/ Six new references have been added to this section (pages 16-17 of the revised proposal) showing past work accomplished by the group that meets this objective and is emblematic of the work this group plans to do in the future.

3. **“Probably just a minor typo, but why first 3 pages of sections all numbered "1"?”**

A/The first three pages are now properly numbered.

4. **“I recommend writing more about the integration of objectives 1 and 2 as feasibility from producers’ perspective depends on demand.”**

A/We slightly modified objectives 1, and 2 to show the integration of these two objectives (pages 13 and 14 of the revised proposal).

5. **“It would be great to touch on how COVID-19 affects marketing channels.”**

A/We added information about the impact of COVID-19 on marketing channels on page 3 (first two paragraphs), section B of the revised proposal.

6. **“Specialty crops is an important topic, but the proposal was missing fundamental components that made it challenging to evaluate. For instance, there was no budget, timeline, PI identification, or support letters. The methods and outreach sections were vague and broad, perhaps due to page constraints.**

A/ This reviewer did not understand the type of proposal he was reviewing, and therefore, we did not address his comments as they were either not relevant or not appropriate for multi-state hatch proposals. For example, a budget is not needed, a PI does not need to be identified, and support letters are not required. The discussion of the methods is intentionally broad to capture the array of methods that our group members typically use to examine the specific research projects they undertake.

7. **I would like this group, who are well qualified to achieve the objectives, to put a little more emphasis on labor and mechanization. I think these are pressing matters for produce industry and ultimately the prices paid by consumers.**

A/ We added information on the importance of and reasons for focusing on labor and mechanization issues in this project. On section B, page 3 and 4, we added:

“An important concern on the supply side of the fresh produce industry is labor availability that could satisfy production needs and consumer demand. The COVID-19 pandemic has made evident that disruptions to the availability of agricultural labor can

have serious implications on the supply (and price) of food products. Because fruits and vegetables are heavily dependent on agricultural labor, any pandemic event that causes a large share of workers to become ill will have significant effects on the supply of produce. This is particularly worrisome in the fresh produce industry given the number of agricultural workers involved and the close proximity for which they work and live. Therefore, it is important to understand how labor availability disruptions could affect the supply of fresh produce, and how producers and distributors adjust to these disruptions in the short and long-term.”

On the methods section, pages 14, we added:

“Although we will cover a variety of topics, we will make a particular emphasis on labor issues faced by the produce industry, as this issue is one of the most important issues facing this industry, and is one that has a direct impact on produce availability, wages, and, ultimately, prices paid by consumers (Hertz and Zahniser, 2013; Richards, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of labor on the production of fruit and vegetables, forcing slight temporary modifications on the H-2A program (Velandia, Wszelaki, and Bailey, 2020) to guarantee an appropriate labor supply to avoid additional disruptions in the fruit and vegetable supply chain. Mechanization as a short and long-term alternative to solve labor issues, and ultimately disruptions in the produce supply chain will also be evaluated.”

**8. “More discussion on how this project differs from other current projects and how the project will interact with other projects.”**

**A/** We added the following information on page 10 of the revised proposal:

“Although multistate projects NC-140, NCCC212, and W3150 focus on specific production practices and novel technologies that might be considered in the S-1067 project, they do not explore the connections between these production practices and consumer demand, and the overall farm costs and benefits of adopting these practices and technologies. We are likely to interact with members of these projects, as these groups might be interested in exploring the demand implications related to the production practices and technologies they are exploring, as well as the relative costs and benefits of adopting these practices and technologies at the farm level. By strengthening the connection of the S-1067 project with these projects in this way, we are helping expand the impacts of the abovementioned projects.

The rest of the active projects listed in this section are directly or indirectly related to objectives 2, and 3, due to their focus on business models, value chain innovations, and food systems. However, none of them focus specifically on specialty crops. We will collaborate with members of other projects in specific publications and other project outputs when appropriate.”

9. **“Most of the milestones are academic in nature, add more milestones around industry.”**

**A/**Although the members of S1067 are all academics working at U.S. universities, nearly all of us have formal extension appointments and work on applied economic research questions. Often our research is driven by questions that have been asked by industry stakeholders and are important to the decisions made by business leaders. In the next phase of our research project, we will continue to identify questions that are of paramount interest to industry stakeholders.

We will dedicate time at each of our annual meetings to brainstorm ideas and topics that are most relevant to fruit and vegetable producers, and look for more ways to engage industry leaders in the development of new projects that involve members from our group. Before our annual meeting, we will ask group members to forward a list of problems and questions industry has recently brought up to them. A compiled list of these issues will be circulated among group members prior to the meeting. During the annual meeting, we will allocate time on the agenda to discuss these problems and questions, and address existing resources or potential resources that could be developed to address these problems and questions.