

# MINUTES OF THE CAIA 2025 ANNUAL MEETING

**May 27, 2025**

**9– 11 A.M. via Zoom**

Sebastian Bulnes

Antonio Valenzuela

Juan Pablo Cerda

Francisco Contardo

Raimundo Lira

Brock Becker

Kellen Newhouse

Carson McDaniel

Debbie Willmann

Chris Henry

Karen Brux

Jeanette Palmer

Sarah Richardson

Emiliano Escobedo

John McGuigan

# Welcome Remarks

Karen Brux convened the meeting around 9:05 A.M. Raimundo commented that the previous season was a good one for the Chilean avocado industry, noting increased exports to the US and good prices. He expressed optimism for the upcoming season, suggesting potential for further growth. Karen then introduced CAIA’s new board member, Antonio Valenzuela, the commercial manager for avocados at Westfalia Chile, replacing Carmen Gloria. Antonio briefly introduced himself and expressed his willingness to help and add value in any way possible.

Karen then announced a new addition to the meeting agenda, and this was the election of officers. This would take place later in the meeting.

**Approval of 2024 Mid-Term Meeting Minutes**

Karen directed everyone’s attention to the 2024 mid-term meeting minutes. Juan Pablo asked about a proposed change that was made to board member voting rights during the mid-term meeting, and questioned whether the bylaws were changed to reflect this. Karen reconfirmed that during the mid-term meeting, CAIA had decided to have 5 voting members from Chile and 5 from the U.S., with the representative from the Chilean Avocado Committee, Francisco Contardo, not having voting rights. Karen clarified that this was approved but still needs to be added to the bylaws. Francisco, now the chair of the board of the Chilean Avocado Committee, inquired if his new position within the committee changes his voting status, and Karen confirmed that it does not. The decision to remove voting rights from the committee rep was done to maintain balance between importers and exporters. Juan Pablo Cerda made a motion to approve the minutes. This was seconded by Sebastian Bulnes. The minutes were then approved.

**2024/25 Marketing Wrap-up**

Karen presented an overview of the social media marketing efforts for Chilean avocados. She highlighted the success on Instagram and Facebook, with increased followers, reach, and engagement rates. Short reels, giveaways, and avocado tips perform well, with some content going viral. Contests have been an important engagement strategy, especially during the peak season for Chilean avocados, from September to December.

Karen also discussed the work that has been done with influencers, focusing on plant-based lifestyles, dieticians, and creative recipe ideas. She outlined plans for social media content, including influencer-led day-in-the-life videos and themed recipes. Karen concluded by addressing consumer concerns about food costs and inflation, emphasizing the need to build a strong value proposition for avocados in the current economic climate.

Finally, she played several videos and reels that performed well on social media. She emphasized the importance of incorporating trends, sounds, and visuals for effective audience engagement. Karen noted the importance of defining and communicating the unique value proposition for avocados, especially in the context of consumer preferences and economic considerations.

### **Financial Report**

### Karen presented the financial report for the third quarter and an updated budget. The assessment revenue has more than doubled expectations, with Chile shipping over 25 million pounds to the US, resulting in $540,000 in revenue. Interest income is around $38,000, and there's an unexpected refund from Costco of $27,784. Interest income is expected to reach $45,000 by the end of CAIA’s financial year.

While marketing expenses are in line with estimates, admin expenses are a concern as they exceed the current membership fees. Karen proposed increasing annual membership fees to $2,500 or $3,000 per member to cover the $25,000 in admin costs. The group discussed the possibility of different fee structures for exporters and importers. Karen asked if annual audits are required by AMS, and Jeanette confirmed that they are mandated by AMS. Sebastian Bulnes commented that there are two options for CAIA. Increase the membership fee and/or increase the number of members.

There was a discussion about low membership numbers in CAIA and potential strategies to recruit new members. Karen stated that there are fewer importers now than in the past. They identified Baika as a key exporter to try to bring back as a member. Karen will reach out to Jose Gabriel Correa. John McGuigan asked if CAIA could use the interest earned from their bank account to cover admin fees, and Sarah Richardson replied no. Juan Pablo asked for a list of importer numbers. Karen replied that she would send after the meeting, and then said all the members were in the meeting. Sebastian Bulnes mentioned LGS, Dayka Hackett and Calavo as potential importer members.

Juan Pablo suggested taking 30 days to try recruiting new members before considering increasing membership fees. Karen agreed to reach out to potential new members and get an updated list of importers to the Board. They plan to take a vote on membership dues via email if needed. Karen also commented that she will contact CAIA’s accounting firm and see if there’s any room for them to reduce their fees.

### **Chilean Avocado 2025/26 Outlook**

The group then discussed volume projections for the upcoming season. The Chilean avocado industry is seeing bigger sizes and expects a good upcoming season, though official estimates are not yet available. Exporters anticipate a shorter window for Chilean avocados in Europe due to increased competition from Peru and Morocco, potentially leading to more exports to the US market. Francisco Contardo commented that this has been the biggest and the longest season in the past 10 years for Chilean avocados. They will start working on the estimate for the coming season in June and hopefully the estimate will be ready by the end of July. The domestic market in Chile is expected to be challenging, further encouraging exporters to seek international opportunities.

The group discussed volume estimates for Chilean avocado imports to the US market. They initially considered 20 million pounds as a conservative estimate, but some members felt that the figure could exceed 25 million. After debate, they settled on a compromise of 22.5 million pounds for budgeting purposes. The group acknowledged that the exact number is less important than having a starting point, as they have sufficient reserves to accommodate variations.

Regarding marketing, there was a discussion about the need for strategic allocation of funds to build the category and change the narrative around Chilean avocados in the US market. Karen proposed a two-tiered strategy for trade marketing: supporting existing customers and growing business with new strategic customers. The Board agreed to increase spending on trade marketing this year, with suggestions ranging from $200,000 to $800,000. They settled on a starting budget of $500,000, which can be adjusted based on fruit supply and market conditions. Karen plans to have individual conversations with importers to gather feedback and develop a comprehensive plan. The group also discussed creating an educational piece about Chilean avocados to be used as a marketing tool for importers and retailers.

The committee discussed and agreed on a marketing budget of $500,000. They decided to increase membership dues to $2,500 per company to cover expenses. T

**Officer Election**

Karen asked if anyone else on the Board was interested in running for an officer position. If not, all existing officers have confirmed that they are willing to continue for another two years. Chris Henry commented that we might have an issue because Francisco Contardo currently does not have a vote and, as Vice Chair, he could potentially be in a situation where he would need to vote. Jeanette and Sarah are going to research Robert’s Rules for clarification on this. The officers were reelected to serve another 2 years, but AMS will confirm whether there are issues with Francisco continuing as Vice Chair, in light of the fact that he currently does not have voting rights.

**Update from the HAB/Miscellaneous**

John McGuigan from the Hass Avocado Board provided an update on sustainability initiatives and the BOLD program. The HAB will be presenting their new strategic plan for 2026-2030 during their annual meeting this Thursday. John thanked CAIA for their support of the BOLD program and mentioned that the HAB is working with a company called How Good on sustainability.

Francisco stated that he will share any updates on sustainability from Chile as available.

Karen reconfirmed that the budget would be finalized and submitted soon, with Karen reaching out to the Board for input on marketing plans and potential new members.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 A.M.