

UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP

Draft Minutes of meeting on Thursday 14 April 2011, 12.30 – 16.00

Room 304, 55 Whitehall

Mike Ambrose (MA), Chair – JIC
Bob Sherman (BS) – Garden Organic
Brian Ford-Lloyd (BF-L) – Birmingham
University
Abi Johnson (AJ) – EMR
Dave Astley (DA) – Warwick
George Campbell (GC) – SASA
Farhana Amin (FA) – Defra
Brenda Rawson (BR) - Defra

Nigel Maxted (NM) – Birmingham
University
Mike Camlin (MC) – AFBINI
Matt Ordidge (MO) – Reading
University
Ianto Thomas (IT) – BBSRC
Rob Hornsey (RH) – GRU
Frances Radcliffe (FR) – Defra
Julian Jackson (JJ) – Defra

11/01 Apologies

Joan Cottrell
Simon Linington
Neil Munro
Sean May

Feli Felicidad
Penny Maplestone
Gavin Ramsay

11/02 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2010

MA expressed thanks for the prompt circulation of the October minutes. These were agreed subject to one textual amendment.

BF-L commented that the October minutes had captured the range of discussion which was helpful for those members unable to attend the meeting.

11/03 Matters arising

Referring back to the ECPGR review, NM noted that the concerns he raised about possible duplication of work on *in-situ* inventories had now been resolved.

11/04 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

JJ thanked MA for his excellent work in running the Group. He also expressed his personal appreciation for the ongoing support that MA had given him.

NM and MA had been proposed and seconded for the position of Chair and Deputy Chair respectively. No other nominations had been received. The Group agreed the proposals.

JJ explained that, in agreement with MA, the position of Vice Chair would be reviewed after eighteen months to see if any other Members would like to step in. MA said he was open to encouraging others who wanted to get involved in the full range of issues. He said that he would be supporting NM from the *ex-situ* side.

11/5 Report from the 4th Meeting of the Governing Body of the ITPGR and update on ABS negotiations

JJ explained that the European regional group (EU Member States and Switzerland and Norway) had done much preparatory work and agreement had been reached on financial rules. Agreement had been reached on agreeing compliance mechanisms and a process was now in place to promote compliance with the Treaty's provisions, and to address any non-compliance. JJ noted that membership and funding of the Compliance Committee needed to be agreed.

There had been good progress in implementation of the Funding Strategy. There was a strong lobbying sector from Civil Society seeking funding for more projects addressing *in situ* conservation.

JJ thanked everyone for their contributions to the MLS return noting that there would be a similar exercise in the future. He also raised the ongoing issue of inclusion of material from Natural and Legal Persons.

Proposed changes to the SMTA were not reopened, probably as it was too problematic to do so. And Annex 1 was not revisited. JJ explained that there was an attempt to draw together some of the high level issues such as food security and climate change.

JJ considered how agreement of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing bedded in with the Treaty, noting the need for better engagement between the two secretariats.

JJ explained that the Governing Body agreed to the establishment of the Third Party Beneficiary Committee, an independent body established to resolve disputes concerning SMTA. However there was no agreement that the Third Party Beneficiary would consider disputes arising from the use of the SMTA for non-Annex 1 crops.

DA noted that it was unclear why material had been excluded from Annex 1 during original negotiations. It was important to be aware of what the politics were in order to give sensible advice from a global perspective.

JJ explained that Japan was considering ratifying at the same time as the Nagoya Protocol and that the United States was in the process of getting the proposal through the Senate.

BF-L asked what the means were for dealing with those countries not complying with MLS. JJ explained that the Compliance Committee was looking to address this. Either he as National Coordinator for the UK, the Committee, the Secretariat, or indeed the country itself could act as the trigger for action on non-compliance. The Governing Body, with the agreement of the Compliance Committee, could apply sanctions or recommendations to ensure compliance.

MA indicated that there was no change to the current SMTA noting that MO had raised the issue of wider interpretation at the Group's last meeting. He asked MO how this was progressing with Defra. MO explained that the change was essentially in implementation of the agreement. There had been no discussions about the reporting procedure but records would be kept of what and when material was supplied.

MA went on to thank JJ and BR for their work in compiling the MLS questionnaire.

NM asked whether there was any feedback on the funding strategy. JJ explained that the matter had not been considered at the meeting. He agreed to provide an update once he had clarified the final outcome.

11/6 UK Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

NM had re-circulated the Portal improvements document for further comment and had collated the information.

JJ indicated that the contract with ADAS was in the process of being renegotiated to ensure that it delivered value for money. There was a need to look at the proposals in detail as these would form ADAS' brief. NM suggested meeting with ADAS: JJ and FR agreed that this was a sensible approach. NM expressed disappointment that there were so few documents to add to the Portal and invited Members to contribute their associations' reports and papers.

11/7 UK Landrace Conservation and use Concept Note

NM explained that this had come out of an attempt ten years ago to conserve UK vegetable and fruit landraces. The problem was that landrace maintainers were often older people whose numbers were steadily dwindling and so landraces were being lost with them. He indicated that the issue had been well debated previously so while the content of the SID 2 was fairly superficial, he had in-depth information on costings. It was now a case of waiting for feedback from Defra. JJ said that he and FA would consider the proposal.

FA asked about the possibility of overlap with the work of the gene banks. NM explained that there would be no duplication between current work and that which was proposed. His proposal was the link between collecting fresh material and identifying that which was currently in the collection.

On the matter of *ex-situ* material, FA asked what would happen after three years. NM explained that the majority of material was held as seed and existing gene banks had agreed to receive it. MO indicated that in terms of the National Fruit Collection

there was an existing procedure for bringing material in. The decision was taken that it would not be possible to extend it to fruit material. NM observed that while fruit trees would not disappear particularly quickly vegetable landraces would. He indicated that the first meeting in 2003 had looked at the diversity of landrace material noting that while there were niche markets for this, a longer term project was needed.

MA indicated that this was a complex area noting that the opportunity to address any issues was welcome. This would help the Group put forward its vision and make a case.

NM pointed out that it was not possible to capture all the issues in the SID 2. FA said that she and JJ would discuss the proposal and look at taking the final application forward.

NM highlighted the importance of conserving genetic diversity cautioning that, unless action was taken now, it could be lost. FR expressed her concern at the feasibility of establishing a new protection scheme for landraces for England and Wales noting that it was essential that any such scheme built on existing protection arrangements already present, and that funding requirements were not overly ambitious. NM indicated that Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) had already established a landrace protection scheme in 2006 and were looking to extend it. GC explained that this came under SASA's remit noting that those participating were an active part of the process. FR felt that the discussion had been helpful and stressed the need for manageable outcomes.

MA recalled discussions with MO and colleagues at the University of Reading on whether it might be more appropriate to the NFC at Brogdale to carry out an initial survey of what material was out there as a first phase in the proposed project. He highlighted the importance of following up knowledge gathering with targeted conservation. BS noted that there was much enthusiasm for landrace conservation indicating that he was in favour of the informal network approach to landrace management.

DA highlighted the importance of knowing where the material was and creating an effective network to manage it. Unless these links were in place the opportunity to move material which was under threat would be lost.

IT noted that the National Trust had a keen interest in conserving fruit landraces.

FA said that she would submit a set of questions to NM and take it from there. NM clarified that the SID 2 application was being made on behalf of the Group and not Birmingham University as a sole applicant.

11/8 Updating the UK National Inventory and EURISCO

IT explained that he had new material to add to the inventory. He pointed out that there were now two new fields on EURISCO; AEGIS and MLS status, he invited members to include this when returning their data. He observed that the number of groups being targeted was not as comprehensive as in the Country report. He

suggested that the Chair emailed the various bodies inviting them to get involved. IT said that he was open to receiving new data by the end of the summer noting that the data on the UK portal was now two years old. He informed Members that 'Google Fusion Tables' provided the latest data.

11/9 AEGIS – Associate Membership Agreements

MA explained that he and his colleagues would be looking at how AEGIS membership would fit with JIC's activities. NM said that his interest was from the *in-situ* side.

JJ asked if there were any sticking points to membership in particular from the legal aspect. MO asked whether clarification had been given on Reading's obligations under the Agreement. JJ and BR said that they would look into the matter and respond shortly. GC indicated that there were some issues around the collections not being easily available.

11/10 ECPR UK Country Quota

MA tabled a discussion paper for this item (see Annex), which underlined the UK was two quota spaces short. NM told the Group that two spaces would not be used from the UK allocation so in fact there was a sufficient quota.

NM asked if there had been any more feedback following the ECPGR 2010 external review. JJ explained that the extraordinary Steering Committee had considered the report and delegated the Executive Committee to take forward a number of issues for consideration at the next Steering Committee

NM said that he was aware of a proposal to move ECPGR into Brussels and asked whether this had been discussed with the UK. JJ said that he was unaware of this proposal. NM went on to caution that such a move could have far-reaching implications and noted the need to keep an eye on progress.

11/11 Agrobiodiversity/Biodiversity contacts

NM explained that he had been working with John Hopkins in putting together a report entitled "Crop Wild Relatives: Plant conservation for food security" which had been published by Natural England. MA thanked NM for his work noting that the report had been well received. It was hoped that this would result in funding opportunities.

JJ noted that the report had picked up interest in Defra's press office and an article had featured in April's edition of Landscape. Noting the possible relevance of the forthcoming Natural Environment White Paper.

NM indicated that the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) grant would include funding for an additional PHD student. Part of their work would be on genetic analysis of material at the Lizard to be compared with other populations away from the Lizard.

Referring to Target 13 on agrobiodiversity in the CBD, FR noted that it was helpful to have a target for the conservation of CWR material.

11/12 Applications / project news

NM indicated that this would be included as a regular UKPGRG agenda item so that everyone knew what others were doing. He reported that the meeting on European Plant Genetic Resources, which he and MO had attended, had been very useful. He said that CGN was very organised and was having regular meetings with the gene banks as well as breeding expeditions. Breeders had reported that they benefitted from working with gene banks.

DA noted that the collections in CGN tended to be funded equally between the Centre and breeders. A workshop was taking place in Lithuania on 6 September and there was funding for two people from each country to attend (one each from crops and landraces). JJ said that he would give consideration to who should go.

DA asked whether there was any more information concerning the EUROGENEBANK proposal. JJ noted the need to respond but there was an issue around how to split trees. MO explained that Reading had been involved previously. He expressed concern that, from discussions that he had seen, there was a suggestion to try to significantly reduce the number of partners involved in the proposal. If, as he understood it, the aim of the proposal was to help realise the aspirations of the ECPGR, then he was unsure how this would work with a limited number of partners. JJ said that he would feed the points raised into the discussion.

BF-L noted that with regard to PGR the experimental side would be on *brassicas* and white fly resistance. DA noted that there was an awareness in the UK and good support from the breeding and seed sectors.

MA reported on a five year National Capability Grant proposal that had just been submitted to BBSRC to cover staffing and operations of the GRU at JIC. Letters from industry had been sought which specifically listed evidence of the utility of PGR that was essential in underpinning their programmes. FR asked whether MA could share the letters with her, as evidence of support was useful for discussions within Defra. MA thought that permission for this would need to be sought and agreed to explore the matter.

BS noted that Garden Organic and the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place were putting together a proposal to collaborate, beginning with a food and (heritage) seed event in September.

MA explained that he was the incoming president of the new National Thatching Straw Growers Association whose aim was to bring quality assurance for the growing of crops. The Association's inaugural AGM was taking place in May.

MO explained that he was involved in an FP7 project. One of the key work areas was bringing together a subset of material from Brogdale (together with other European collections) with a view to carrying out some further molecular

characterisation, aimed overall at making the material more accessible for marker assisted breeding.

AJ indicated that EMR had a commercially funded cherry breeding programme with the hope of getting germplasm into EMR.

GC explained that he was involved in a small project: “an investigation into the morphology of a range of *napus* kales”, on eighty six field-grown accessions. He said that outcomes would be known towards the end of the year.

MA reported that JIC was the coordinator for the recently announced BBSRC’s wheat pre-breeding programme that would see research undertaken at JIC, Rothamsted Research, NIAB and the University of Nottingham. This was a five year project with the aim of underpinning and enhancing wheat breeding activities in the UK and beyond. The new material generated by the project would be used by breeding companies to develop new varieties for use by farmers. MA explained that no collection of new germplasm was involved as there was enough material available in donor gene pools.

BF-L asked about the yield barrier. MA explained that the project was looking outside of the usual material. He noted that the private sector could not do this on its own and needed the support of the public sector to develop appropriate resources. This was good news as the UK’s resources were playing an important role in the programme.

11/13 Harvesting Diversity II

MA noted that there had been some recent discussion prompted by correspondence from David Smith. In 2009 MA had attended a meeting of the Standing Committee for Farm Animal Genetic Resources (FAnGR) and had proposed a further diversity meeting to look at future priorities. There had been positive feedback from the FAnGR Committee at the time and David Smith felt that a further meeting would be useful. MA said he would get in contact with a view to setting up the agenda.

FR explained that from FAnGR’s point of view this had slipped down their agenda and they would need to be clear on the objectives in view of budget constraints. She indicated that the pressing priority was to engage more with the breed societies.

NM indicated that Harvesting Diversity II was a little vague. Noting that it could be the showcase for conserved materials, MA suggested that plant breeders and others attending the proposed meeting needed to be clear on what they wanted from the plant genetic resources community so that there was a clear focus for use.

MA explained that the impetus for the meeting had originally come from Defra. He considered whether anything was coming up that might initiate the various groups to come together, noting that Harvesting Diversity had initially come out of an announcement of policy. MA said that it would be very useful to look at what had been achieved since implementation of food and agriculture policy.

JJ suggested setting certain elements of the groups together ahead of the FAO Commission meeting in July to consider some cross-sector elements and common themes. This could be a useful meeting of minds as well as a review of Defra policy.

FR indicated that it was not possible to do anything before July but any key papers could be circulated to the FAnGR Committee for comment.

MA said that meeting counterparts from the animal and microbial sectors with Defra would be useful, and NM suggested that a meeting between PGR conservers and users would be helpful in terms of awareness of what others were doing.

JJ asked whether anything similar had happened in Wageningen. NM explained that while there was no UK breeders there, the EU breeders were saying how useful it had been in terms of collaboration.

MA indicated that it would be possible to build more discussion on utilisation of PGRFA at the technical summer visit when there would be the opportunity for JIC's project leaders to demonstrate the Centre's interaction with the breeding companies.

BF-L raised the issue of the third group – the molecular genetic community – and wondered whether it would be feasible to have a meeting of all three.

11/14 Summer Technical Visit

MA confirmed 23 June for the visit to JIC.

11/15 AOB

JJ noted that he had circulated papers regarding the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The Global Plan of Action and Revised Gene Bank Standards were up for discussion and would feed into July's Commission meeting. JJ invited Members to give their views.

FR endorsed JJ's earlier appreciation of the time and effort MA had given to the Group and welcomed NM as the new Chair.

11/16 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 6 October 2011**.

ANNEX

UKPGRG Discussion paper on use of UK ECPGR Country Quota in Phase VIII

Background:

A consequence of the budget restrictions agreed at the 11th ECPGR Steering Committee meeting in Sarajevo 2008 was that Chairs of working groups and Central Crop Database Managers will no longer be paid for out of the central funds administered by the Secretariat but would count against the allotted country quota. As a result of the funds that the UK contributes to ECPGR the quota was set at 13 fully funded places for attending members as set out in appendix 1.

A list of planned meetings for Phase VII is presented in list 1. Matching meetings against nominated attending members (appendix 2) shows that, as of April 2011 we are currently running at 2 meeting of interest above our allotted quota. This is the first time this situation has arisen in the UK so we now have to discuss how we will manage this situation.

Options:

As I see it, the following options are possible and should be opened up for discussion.

1. Use our quota until it runs out;
2. Work to prioritise between working group attendance;
3. Seek members to come forward who would be willing to self fund attending;
4. Seek additional funds for two meetings to ensure the UK can achieve the coverage and engagement that is required.

Mike Ambrose (04/2011)

List 1. ECPGR Phase VIII Working Group Meetings

*** 7 Quota used. 8 remaining where an attending UK member would be desirable.**

2010

- **Brassica** Working Group - 4th meeting, 2-3 March 2010, Catania, Italy (1 quota)
- **Grain Legumes** Working Group 22-23 April 2010 Antalya, Turkey (1 quota)
- **Forages** Working Group - 10th meeting, 27-29 April 2010 Poel, Germany (1 quota)
- **Fibre Crops (Flax and Hemp)** Working Group - 2nd meeting 7-9 July 2010 Šumperk, Czech Republic (1 quota)
- **Prunus** Working Group - 8th meeting, 7-9 September 2010 Forlì, Italy (1 quota)
- **Wild Species** Conservation in Genetic Reserves WG and **On-farm** Conservation and Management WG –
First meetings and final dissemination meeting of AEGRO project, 13-16 September 2010 Madeira, Portugal (can use 2 quota. 1 quota)
- **Avena** Working Group - 6th meeting, October 2010 Suceava, Romania (1 quota)
- **Cucurbits** Working Group - 2nd meeting, October 2010, Georgia (1 quota)
- **ECPGR Steering Committee meeting**, 14-16 December 2010 in Bratislava, Slovakia (1 quota)

2011

- **Solanaceae** Working Group – 1st meeting, Izmir, Turkey, March 2011 (1 quota)
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- **Barley** Working Group meeting – 7th meeting, Cyprus, April/May 2011 (1 quota- currently under discussion)
- **On-farm** conservation and management Working Group - 2nd meeting, September 2011 (1 quota)
- **Leafy vegetables** Working Group – 2nd meeting, October/November 2011, Slovenia (1 quota)
- **Wheat** Working Group – 3rd meeting (1 quota) (Differed to May 2012)

- **Beta** Working Group – 4th meeting, Cappelle-en-Pévèle, France **(1 quota)**
- **Allium** Working Group – 7th meeting **(1 quota- nomination now being made)**
- **Potato** Working Group – 4th meeting **(1 quota)**
- **Malus/Pyrus** Working Group – 4th meeting **(1 quota)**
- **Umbellifer Crops** Working Group – 1st meeting **(1 quota This is now to be funded from AEGIS funds)**

2012

- **Vitis** Working Group – 2nd meeting **(1 quota)**

2013

- **Umbellifer Crops** Working Group – 2nd meeting **(1 quota)**

Appendix 1.

ECPGR country quotas during Phase VIII (2009-2013)

Country quotas for participation in Crop Working Group meetings during Phase VIII were defined by the Steering Committee during its 11th meeting (see **REPORT OF THE ELEVENTH STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**, Sarajevo, 2-5 September 2008. Table 1, p. 19). The country quotas are as follows:

Category Quota

A	7
B	8
C	9
D	11
E	13

Country Category

MONTENEGRO	A
ARMENIA	A
GEORGIA	A

AZERBAIJAN	A
MACEDONIA (FYR)	A
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	A
ALBANIA	A
ESTONIA	A
MALTA	A
LATVIA	A
BULGARIA	A
SERBIA	A
LITHUANIA	B
ICELAND	B
CYPRUS	B
UKRAINE	B
CROATIA	B
SLOVAKIA	B
ROMANIA	B
SLOVENIA	B
HUNGARY	C
CZECH REPUBLIC	C
TURKEY	C
ISRAEL	C
IRELAND	C
POLAND	C
PORTUGAL	C
FINLAND	C
GREECE	C
DENMARK	D
NORWAY	D
AUSTRIA	D
SWEDEN	D
BELGIUM	D

RUSSIAN FEDERATION	D
SWITZERLAND	D
NETHERLANDS	D
SPAIN	D
ITALY	E
FRANCE	E
UNITED KINGDOM	E
GERMANY	E

***Modus operandi* for participation in ECPGR-funded meetings**

Each country is assigned a quota of funded participants to attend Working Group meetings organized by ECPGR during the entire Phase. When the country has exhausted its quota, it may send self-funded participants to meetings of interest. The country quotas are based on the following considerations:

- the level of research and development activities in the area of genetic resources conservation and utilization in the countries;
- the past attendance and contribution of the countries in the Working Group meetings.

In addition to the quota assigned to each country, a quota is assigned to the Working Group Chairs to allow each Working Group to maximally benefit from the available expertise on that crop in the European region. The Working Group Chair quota is at the Chair's discretion on the understanding that the Chair can invite one additional expert from one of the ECPGR member countries for each Working Group meeting. Should it so wish, in consultation with the Secretariat, a country can transfer part of its quota for use by other countries or by Working Groups.