

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group (UKPGRG) Meeting

DATE & TIME: Tuesday 4th August 2026, 13:30 – 17:30

LOCATION: MS Teams & Elsom Seeds, Pinchbeck Road, Spalding, PE11 1QG

MINUTES

Attendees

Noam Chayut	John Innes Centre (NC - Chair)	Nigel Maxted	Uni. of Birmingham (NM)
Charlotte Lusty	Kew (CL – Deputy Chair)	Charlotte Allender	Uni. of Warwick (CA)
Sean May	Uni. of Nottingham (SM)	Richard Tudor	Elsom Seeds (RT)
Matt Ordidge	Uni. of Reading (MO)	Adam Gauley	AFBI (AG)
Solomy Kaweesi	Defra (SK)	Catrina Fenton	Garden Organic (CF)
Clare Williams	Defra (CW)	Sarah Trinder	Uni. of Warwick (ST)
Lydia Mckenzie	Defra (LM)	Lin Huang	Aberystwyth University (LH)
Taiwo Alaje	Defra (TA)	Gaynor McKenzie	John Hutton Institute (GM)
Anna Brohan	Defra (AB)	Lydia Smith	Niab (LS)
Seren Irwin	Defra (SI)	Elizabeth Scott	Niab (ES)
Kalani Seymour	Plant Heritage (KS)	Sarah Watson-Jones	Aberystwyth Uni. (SWJ)
Louise Everest	BSPB (LE)	Simon Orford	John Innes Centre (SO)
Alison Foster	Plant Heritage (AF)	Rodrigo Echegoyen- Nava	Elsom Seeds, (REN)
Charlotte Carne	Defra (CC)	Sam Bishop	Defra (SB)

26/12 Welcome and Introduction of new Chair and Deputy Chair (NM)

NM said his goodbyes as Chair, and welcomed NC as Chair and CL as Deputy Chair. NC and CL thanked NM and CA for their hard work in supporting the group, and progressing plant genetic resources domestically and internationally.

26/13 Apologies and introductions (NC & CL)

Apologies were received from Carly Cowell (Botanic Gardens Conservation International), Gwen Hines (Plant Heritage) and Sharon Balding (Kew Gardens).

LE attended the meeting on behalf of the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB), following Anthony Hopkins departure from BSPB.

The group agreed to record the meeting for note taking purposes.

26/14 Minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2026 (NC & CL)

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

26/15 Actions and Matters arising (NC & CL)

Relevant actions and matters arising from previous minutes were addressed under the remaining agenda items.

26/16 Defra vision and Defra update (NC & CL)

AB explained the aim for the standing agenda item on Defra updates is to cover updates since the previous UKPGRG meeting on international and domestic policy progress, and centralised Defra communications including relevant funding opportunities. AB welcomed comments on this approach to the Defra Update standing item.

ACTION: UKPGRG members to provide feedback to AB on the approach of the Defra updates standing agenda item if they have any comments.

AB provided an update on international matters:

- The Twelfth Governing Body Session for the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) has tentatively been agreed take place from 22-26 November 2027.
- In the interim period between the ITPGRFA Governing Body meetings, Defra has continued to strengthen relationships with other contracting parties and the Treaty's Secretariat.
- UKPGRG members attended a workshop at Kew Gardens on 13 May 2026. The workshop hosted the ITPGRFA Secretariat and discussed how botanical gardens and genebanks can help utilise plant diversity for positive change in food systems. As part of the workshop's next steps, the ITPGRFA Secretariat have expressed early interest in publishing a case study showcasing UK genebanks and their activities, UK assets and technologies. If the case study commences, Defra will contact the UKPGRG for text and official photography, and the study will be published and presented at the next ITPGRFA Governing Body meeting.
- Defra attended the ITPGRFA Secretariat's webinar which presented an analysis on the operations of the multilateral system for access and benefit sharing.
- The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) will hold its Twenty-first Regular Session in March 2027. During 2026, Defra has attended a number of the CGRFA's working groups such as the Adhoc Expert Team on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (AETBFA). The Second Session of the AETBFA took place between 30 June – 2 July 2026. Sessional discussions included agricultural biodiversity in relation to food security and climate resilience, finalising voluntary guidelines for the implementation of the international framework for action for biodiversity, and reviewed the questionnaire that will inform the second State of the World Report on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture (SWBFA report).
- Defra's Plant Genetic Resources team have collaborated with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to suggest priority indicators for the second SWBFA report. The fifteen final indicators were accepted by the AETBFA, and can be viewed in the final version of the AETBFA Second Session meeting report.
- Defra attended the Thirteenth Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITWGPRFA) in July 2026. Sessional discussions included the new draft Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GPAPGRFA) and climate change, and the [ITWGPRFA's draft seed study](#) on

the effects of seed policies and legislation on farmers' ability to access and use diverse, locally adapted varieties and landraces. As the National Focal Point, SI invited UKPGRG members to provide comments on the draft seed study by Friday 21 August 2026. Additionally, SI set up a tentative meeting on 26 August 2026 to discuss the draft seed study. AB confirmed that Defra PGR team have coordinated with Defra's Plant Varieties and Seeds to provide responses to the draft seed study. LE confirmed that the study has been circulated to BSPB members.

ACTION: UKPGRG members to provide comments on ITWGPGRFA's draft seed study by Friday 21 August 2026.

- The European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) met in Georgia from 1-4 June 2026 to review progress under phase 11 and begin preparations for the next phase of work. The current ECPGR Secretariat Lorenzo Maggioni is retiring in 2026. The new secretary, Rosemary Navarette will be taking over the post in December 2026 and brings significant experience in international processes and working in the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

CW provided an update on Defra-funded projects:

- A project to produce genomic and characterisation data for material in the UK Vegetable Genebank has been completed and the final report has been produced. CA is going to contact the Vegetable Genetic Improvement Network (VeGIN) to understand what data is useful for the VeGIN and to help scope further genetic sequencing and phenotyping work at the UKVGB.
- The project to produce a UK National Plant Inventory is progressing. The first phase is being undertaken by two PhD students working with NM at the University of Birmingham to develop taxonomic and population inventories of crop wild relatives and landraces. When completed, these inventories will be made publicly available. The inventory is being designed and structured to support future integration into a web-enabled system. A subsequent phase will focus on making the inventory available through an interactive online platform, subject to future funding and development resources.
- Defra's genebank contracts are being reviewed ahead of their upcoming end dates. The UKVGB and the Pea Collection contracts end in March 2027, with an option to extend both contracts. Discussions are ongoing regarding the content of these contracts.
- The following Defra communications including funding opportunities were raised:
 - o £30 million ADOPT fund to support accelerating development of practices and technologies.
 - o £17 million from the Farming Innovation Programme to support collaborative farm-led on-farm research to demonstrate innovative solutions to farming challenges.
 - o The fifth round of Feasibility Studies grant was opened by the Farming Innovation Programme. Applications will close on 9 September 2026 and the grants will support projects with total costs of £200,000 - £500,000 that will last 2 years. The round is looking for early-stage ideas to improve the productivity, sustainability and resilience of farms.
 - o UK has launched first ever taskforce to strengthen climate security to boost the UK's preparedness for climate and nature loss.

- Institute of Grocery Distribution launched Feeding Britain's Future campaign to inspire careers in food and drink to address workforce shortages as well as skills and business gaps.
- The second round of the Darwin Initiative was launched by Defra in May 2026 and closed on 31 August 2026. This round was open for projects focusing on developing the capability and capacity of local and national organisations.
- The King's New Years Honours nominations are open and Defra's Agri-Food Chain directorate is taking nominations. Buckingham Palace Garden Party nominations are also open.
- There's a mailing list with the majority of these communications and funding opportunities. AB invited members to contact the Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) team if they wish to be added to the mailing list.

ACTION: SM to send Defra the list of UKPGRG members' email addresses.

ACTION: UKPGRG members to contact the PGR team via PlantGeneticResources@Defra.gov.uk to be added to Defra's updates mailing list.

26/17 SPS, phytosanitary and global phytosanitary update from Defra (CC & SB)

CC provided an update on engagement on the UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement:

- The UK Government remains committed to concluding a UK/EU SPS Agreement
- Negotiations are continuing and a new Summit date will be agreed as soon as possible.
- The SPS agreement is expected to enter into force around mid-2027.
- High level information has already been published on this gov.uk webpage to raise awareness of the agreement and support business readiness.
- The SPS Readiness team are planning to publish further detail at a later date - and we are keen to work with stakeholders to understand what is most useful and how we can most effectively share information
- The SPS Readiness team understand that the UK Plant Genetics Resources (PGR) community is a specialist area and will need a tailored approach. The team are keen to collaborate on this and understand what is most helpful.
- The SPS Readiness team recommend joining the [SPS Readiness mailing list](#), to receive alerts and updates

NC invited Defra Group representatives to attend the John Innes Centre or UK Vegetable Genebank to observe how genebanks can be impacted differently than other collections by the SPS regime.

ACTION: NC and/or CA to liaise with Defra's UK-EU SPS Readiness team to arrange site visits for relevant Defra Group representatives.

The group provided comments and observations on the SPS regime:

- Refinement of the SPS regime is needed to reflect how genebanks work with smaller quantities of germplasm material.
- Current examples of difficulties obtaining and testing material:
 - Some large seed lots are being imported into the UK and are getting stopped for not possessing non-mandatory certification.
 - The impact on industry in obtaining and testing seed packets that contain small quantities such as 10-20 seeds per packet.
 - The impact of rising phytosanitary assurance costs on the ability to share material under the International Plant Treaty's multi-lateral system of access and benefit sharing.

- Limited volumes of globally-rare plants impacting the availability of seed for testing.

In the discussion of how the UKPGRG can provide further feedback on the SPS agreement, CL and NC suggested creating a list of UKPGRG members or a sub-group of the UKPGRG to act as a focal point for the group. CC offered to attend future UKPGRG meetings and welcomed written feedback on the impacts of the agreement and how Defra's SPS Readiness team can disseminate messages to the UK PGR community.

ACTION: CL and NC to liaise with UKPGRG members to agree a format to discuss and provide feedback on the UK-EU SPS agreement.

26/18 UK Biodiversity Indicator on Plant Genetic Resources (UKBI PGR) (TA)

TA presented on the development of the UKBI PGR.

The presented data was artificial due to insufficient data currently available to produce any trends. Suitable data to produce official accredited statistics requires a timespan of two to three years.

The group discussed the following topics in relation to the developing the UKBI PGR:

- The level of biological description the indicator data should focus on, and genus and taxon level were highlighted.
- There are 5 or 6 proposed UKBI PGR indicators, which will also be used to report to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). It was noted that more indicators would be challenging for international reporting however they could be beneficial for domestic reporting and monitoring.
- AB confirmed that the current focus is to produce an initial revised UKBI PGR. In the future further datasets could underpin the UKBI PGR and be reported on under a sub-heading. SM recommended collecting a detailed level of data earlier than it is expected to be reported on.
- The standardisation of UKBI PGR metrics alongside CBD member state reporting. The group highlighted differing reporting approaches and scopes amongst CBD member states, as well as some subsets of data with standardised descriptors. CL noted that ex-situ reporting to the GPAPGRFA is detailed, and highlighted this as a source for standardising reporting.
- The need for agreed criteria to determine which plant species and genetic resources fall within the scope of UKBI PGR reporting, including the treatment of model species such as *Arabidopsis*.
- It was highlighted that the Food and Agriculture Organization State of the World report divides the UK collection into *Arabidopsis* and all other plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
- Clarity on the definition of in-situ collections, for the purposes of the inclusion of landraces. AB noted the aim of reporting on landraces is to understand all the landraces that exist within the UK.
- Whether to report on in-situ passive conservation considering there are 2.8 million records under this category.
- The publication of the UKBI PGR as statistics as well as a paper.
- The benefits of reporting on number of species, noting this is currently reported on in GPAPGRFA under the AETBFA.

TA confirmed that draft UKBI PGR definitions will be made using feedback previously provided and from this meeting. Draft definitions will be shared with the group, where UKPGRG members will be invited to provide further feedback which will aid the revision of the definitions.

26/19 Response to Food security report and Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture outcomes (SI & CL)

SI presented on the interlinkages between food security and the policy context for PGRFA:

- January 2026, a National Security Assessment was published on Global Biodiversity Loss, Ecosystem Degradation and National Security. There has been significant global biodiversity loss since the 1970s, which in turn is impacting global food production.
- Defra published the Farming Roadmap on 24 June 2026, which brings together government commitments on food security, environmental recovery, land use, climate resilience and animal health and welfare.
- The interlinkages between the CGRFA's Framework for Action for Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture and the UK's agricultural policies and Genetic Improvement Network Programme were explored.
- A draft version of the third Global Plan of Action for PGRFA has been published in response to the third State of the World report from 2025.

CL presented on UK resilience in relation to the National Security Assessment and Farming Roadmap, noting the importance to improve resilience in our national collections as well in our agricultural systems.

Following on from the workshop that Kew Gardens held for the ITPGRFA Secretariat, CL highlighted notable discussions including:

- Whether restoration materials should be issued under a standard material transfer agreement.
- Digital Object Identifiers.
- Participation in the ITPGRFA's Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
- The communication of non-monetary benefits.

Th group discussed issues impacting resilience including:

- A gap between organisations that can impact how we address climate change including those facing marketplace barriers
- How the PGR community identifies the needs of breeders and farmers
- Knowledge transfer into the PGR community
- The impact of UK infrastructure impeding the processing of adapted varieties rather than the availability of adapted varieties in the UK.
- The importance of identifying the gap between what diversity exists within the UK and what is conserved in UK genebanks.

CL invited members to contact CL or NC about ideas for discussing UK PGR resilience.

[ACTION: UKPGRG members to contact CL or NC with ideas to progress discussions on UK PGR resilience.](#)

26/20 PGR applications / Project updates (All)

Members shared applications and project updates.

26/21 AOB (All)

Mailing list issues

SM confirmed that Joe Taylor from JNCC was unable to contact the group without being on the mailing list. The group agreed to include Joe Taylor on the mailing list. CA highlighted that it could be beneficial for the group to identify group members and observers.

ACTION: SM to add Joe Taylor to the UKPGRG mailing list.

Novel and Underutilised Crop Network (NUCN)

LS presented an update on the NUCN including:

- The team members: John Hammond (University of Reading), Mary Barker (University of Southampton), Pietro Iannetta (James Hutton Institute), Lydia Smith (Niab, Cambridge), Mark Chapman (University of Southampton) and Sandra Dancer, Network Manager (Southampton)
- NUCN attendance at Farmers days, school projects and REAP Conference 2026 (which will be taking place on 4 November 2026)
- Research and work on high-carbon crop, oil-seed hemp and white millet
- Funding opportunities:
 - Career Development Fund (up to £1000 from BBRSC), rolling call that is now open. [FUNDING & RESEARCH – Novel and Underutilised Crop Network \(NUCNet\)](#)
 - School Fund (£100-£400 from BBRSC), deadline extended until 2 September 2026. [FUNDING & RESEARCH – Novel and Underutilised Crop Network \(NUCNet\)](#)
 - Interdisciplinary Research Grant (£2000-£8000 from BBRSC), deadline extended until 9 September 2026. [FUNDING & RESEARCH – Novel and Underutilised Crop Network \(NUCNet\)](#)
- Joining NUCN membership for updates:
<https://novelcropnetwork.ac.uk/membership/>

Botanic Gardens

Carly Cowell from BGCI has agreed to attend the UKPGRG, following on from Paul Smith's attendance at the group's previous meeting.

MO recommended inviting colleagues from living botanic garden collections including Kew Gardens, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Botanic Garden of Wales. LS recommended inviting Cambridge Botanic. AF suggested contacting David Knott from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

ACTION: CL to formally invite Kew Gardens Living Collections, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Botanic Garden of Wales to attend UKPGRG meetings

AF highlighted there's a subset of Botanic Gardens completing active seed collection work that could be identified and invited.

EURISCO submission

SW-J is taking over the responsibility of reporting on UK plant genetic resources to EURISCO from LH. NC thanked SW-J for taking over the reporting role, and LH for her extensive work as national focal point for reporting to EURISCO. NC invited SW-J to reach out to JIC and UKPGRG for any support for taking over the new role at IBERS.

SW-J and LH asked for the group's consensus for IBERS to report to EURISCO annually from 2027, where SW-J would send a reminder to the group at end October/early November, and IBERS will submit to EURISCO by end of December. NC agreed that reporting annually or every two years would be sufficient.

SW-J and NM discussed whether the University of Birmingham would provide the reporting data for crop wild relatives. It was clarified that the University would provide initial collated reporting data however individual sources would provide their data on an ongoing basis.

ACTION: SW-J to circulate the current reporting templates to the UKPGRG members.

NC noted that EURISCO has the John Innes Centre's most recent reporting data compared to the IBERS presentation as JIC reported directly to EURISCO earlier in 2026.

MO noted that EURISCO reporting should drive the UKBI PGR.

ACTION: SW-J to speak with EURISCO point of contact about flow of data between GENESIS and EURISCO.

ACTION: TA to continue exploring EURISCO reporting to direct the development of the UKBI PGR.

26/22 Date of next meeting (NC/CL)

Provisional date of Thursday 15 October 2026 and a doodle poll will be circulated.

ACTION: Defra to circulate a doodle poll to agree a date for the next UKPGRG meeting.