

## UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP MEETING

9 December 2008

### Present:

Mike Ambrose	JIC	Jack Edgley	PVS
Neil Munro	Garden Organic	Joan Cottrell	Forest Research
Mike Camlin	AFBNI	Matthew Ordridge	Reading
Charlotte Allender	WHRI	Julia Wright	Garden Organic
Simon Linington	RBG Kew	Richard Ellis	University of Reading
Abi Johnson	EMR	Kath Bainbridge	Defra
Nigel Maxted	University of B'ham	Julian Jackson	Defra
Brian Ford-Lloyd	University of B'ham		

### 08/18 Apologies for absence

Dave Astley	WHRI	Andy Mitchell	FFG
Ianto Thomas	BBSRC	Frank Bisby	University of Reading
Amanda Read	BBSRC	Felicidad Fernández	EMR
Gavin Ramsey	SCRI		

Mike Ambrose reflected on Martyn Ibbotson's sad passing and told the group that he had written to his sister on the group's behalf.

**08/19** Introduction of New National Coordinator for PGR

**08/20** Minutes of the meeting held 27 March 2008

Nigel Maxted suggested changing the description of his appointment from 'technical secretary' to 'Deputy Chair'. The group did not object to this. Nigel also suggested that, subject to the presenters' agreement, previous presentations made to the

Group should be made available on the portal. The Group agreed that this would be a good idea. A decision could also be made as to whether they would be best placed on the UKPGRG web site or useful on both

**08/21** Matters arising from previous minutes

These were covered under minutes of the previous meeting

**08/22** Defra reorganisation of GRFA (Julian Jackson)

Julian explained that his role as National Focal Point for the IT and National Co-ordinator for the UK in respect of the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources had moved from the Science and Evidence Group to the Food and Farming Group, this role would sit alongside the Animal Genetic Resource role in the Meat and livestock team. The other half of the role had moved into the International Biodiversity team within the Environment and Rural Group and is focussed on negotiating the ABS (Access and Benefit Sharing) regime under UK's commitment to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).

Mike Ambrose reported on an earlier meeting with Julian and Mike Roper at Defra, together with Nigel Maxted to review the present position concerning GRFA following the recent reorganisation which it was agreed provided an excellent opportunity for Defra to review Defra's current policy on both plant and animal genetic resources

**08/23** Update on the UKGRFA Portal (Julian Jackson)

Julian explained that an ongoing budget for the maintenance of the site had been secured and that he would work with Nigel with regards to further developments of the system. Julian would check that updates suggested by the Group had been implemented. The group agreed that Nigel should continue to act as the Groups focal point for the portal. Nigel encouraged others to add further material to the site. Simon Linington asked if we had any stats on the hits on the site. Julian to update group.

**08/24** Report on the latest meeting of the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Julian Jackson)

There was limited uptake by developing countries of the Treaty, partly due to misunderstanding, also with the emphasis on access rather than benefits and with limited funds coming from Benefits, this was understandable and these challenges would have to be overcome in order to get other Parties to ratify the Treaty. There was also anecdotal evidence of Parties misunderstanding the requirements upon them once they had ratified the Treaty.

Norway had come to agreement whereby a percentage of funds generated from sale of seed would be paid into the Benefit Fund, although not a large amount, this could make a sizeable difference if all Parties managed to come to a similar agreement.

[ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/agp/planttreaty/news/noti005\\_en.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/agp/planttreaty/news/noti005_en.pdf)

Germany had subsequently circulated a document on the implementation of the Multilateral system, which Julian would circulate to the group. This is found here:  
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/ag/agp/planttreaty/gb3/tcit2/tcit204.pdf>

The Commission would be drawing together a submission for the Governing Body on the implementation of article 6 of the Treaty and Julian would be requesting details from the relevant members within the group.

Each member state recounted progress towards the implementation of the sMTA. The UK was consistent with most other member states, identifying some use of the sMTA for both annex 1 and non-annex 1 material. Of note, Germany had issued over 200 sMTA in the last 12 months and Denmark had developed a simplified sMTA for use by hobby growers.

Julian clarified that the negotiations for the ABS regime had been explicitly directed by the Conference of Parties to find a solution complementary to the ITPGRFA.

The group was reminded of the recent request for proposals for projects funded by the ITPGRFA, with a deadline of the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

**08/25** UK National Inventory of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture: current status and future development (Mike Ambrose on behalf of Ianto Thomas)

Mike said that new datasets were needed to populate the UK National Inventory however not all institutes have been responding; if the Group could get to the point where the data was updated annually it could potentially provide useful indicators of ex-situ PGR. Nigel warned that whoever was charged with analysing results would have to bear in mind that number of accessions could drop within reason,

**08/26** UK National Inventory of landrace (Nigel Maxted)

Nigel reminded the group that in 2003/4 the University of Birmingham lead a scoping exercise on extant landraces which revealed a significant wealth of landrace material that was highly localised and severely threatened with distinction and not replicated in ex-situ locations. Maintainers of landraces were generally elderly, (average age was 65), and in 20yrs time the risk is that most will be irrevocably lost. In recognition of the scale of the challenge it was recommended that any project concentrate on conserving vegetables and fruit.

Finding funding for the full project had proved difficult but Nigel had submitted a proposal to cover the initial stages of the project with Defra, which was currently under consideration. Nigel welcomed ideas from the Group on gaining further funding and various options were discussed including seeking lottery funding, although this would require match funding and have an emphasis on local food for the community. Mike Ambrose stressed the importance of linking conservation to use within the project. Nigel welcomed the feedback on the project, but with a short timescale and small expected funding he explained that initial work would be done

by University of Birmingham and WHRI. He would present findings at the next Group meeting.

**08/27** Update on National Fruit Collections (Matt Ordidge)

Matt updated the Group on progress since the previous meeting; all of the contracts have been signed, with the University of Reading in partnership with FAST -a subcontractor in charge of maintenance of the collection. (FAST provide agronomy advice and run trials on soft fruit and Top fruit, they have based their new business site at Brogdale).

Matt said that significant work was planned on morphological verification as well as genetic variation across the apple collection and they were moving towards using molecular genetic techniques for verification. The new pear collection was being checked using fingerprint techniques and work had started looking at practicalities of cryo-preservation.

Matt said that they were looking at varietal responses to climate change, eg drought and water logging and were considering setting up sMTAs for supplying material to some research groups and apple day events. The website would be up and running soon.

**08/28** Update on EMR Cherry resources (Kath Bainbridge)

Kath stated that Feli Fernando Fernandez was now the contact responsible for cherry resources, replacing Kate Evans at EMR. Defra will continue to fund maintenance until March 2009 then a new location is likely to be required. There is a possibility of including a number of important accessions for future preservation into the NFC. In January they would determine how much can be taken on by the NFC and then identify other sites if required.

The discussion above in part related to the list of germplasm identified by Ken Tobbutt earlier in the year before he left EMR. Mike Ambrose reported that he had been in communication with Defra, EMR and NFC over this list and that all parties were now in communication and the details were being discussed.

**08/29** Scottish Biodiversity Committee (Niall Green)

Niall explained that within the Scottish Government there are eco system groups that deal with various different habitats, unfortunately within this 'habitats' approach to biodiversity, there is no mention of rare animal breeds or landraces. During forthcoming Lowland and Farmland ecosystems meeting the ToR needed to be discussed as it was clear there was overlap with other ecosystems groups overlap. There was an important proposal about arable farmland being added to the habitats, in relation to agri-biodiversity. For clarity Niall offered to circulate a copy of the structure of committees.

**08/30** Seeds Directive 98/95/EC and Consultation on Conservation Varieties (Jack Edgley on behalf of Andy Mitchell Plant Varieties and Seeds Division, Defra)

Mike welcomed Jack to the meeting. The Group had been following the development of this legislation for some considerable time and welcomed the opportunity to discuss this with an officer from the PVR office.

Jack asked the group if they had seen the document and offered to circulate the link. The directive (208/62) needs to be implemented by 30/06/09. Jack plans to make a deposition into the consultation and welcomes Group or individual comments by the 23 December.

Jack warned that although the Directive can be quite frightening in parts, he was drawing up a light-touch proposal to encourage those with landrace species to come forward. Subject to consultation, the onus of describing the variety will be on the supplier, by doing this he believes they can administer the application at minimum cost. Defra will be carrying out marketing for England but devolved administrations will have to do their own marketing.

Seed will have to be labelled as a conservation variety and returns made to Defra on an annual basis, with Defra to reporting back to the Commission on uptake. Jack confirmed that this legislation applied only to agriculture species, not vegetables (which are horticultural).

There followed a discussion, the outcome of which was very supportive of the approach that Jack had outlined. Mike said he there were important points that arose from the discussion and he would draft a Group response to the Consultation exercise and circulate it for comments.

#### **08/31**          ECPGR 11<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting (Mike Ambrose)

Mike reported back on the week-long meeting in Sarajevo that coincided with the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> phases of the programme. A short written report had been circulated earlier. Even though a number of issues were raised Mike was a little disappointed with the level of detail reached in the discussions on Network and Working Group achievements and future plans, this was in part due to time constraints but also perhaps due to the mixed levels of understanding on what the Steering Group were looking for.

There was a modest budget increase of 17%. The budgets for Working Groups was to be held at 100%, this meant that although current commitments could be honoured, there was no possibility of undertaking any new work.

The continuation of the AEGIS information coordination programme was agreed, as was an independent review of the ECPGR. Mike would circulate the ToR of the review so that the group could provide input.

#### **08/32**          Summer technical visit (Mike Ambrose)

Mike apologised that information on this had not gone out in sufficient time and the proposed visits had been cancelled. Simon Linnington at the Millennium Seed bank

and Matt Ordridge at the National Fruit Collection were both willing to host a visit in early September.

Simon agreed, subject to confirmation as there may be possible clashes with Kew's anniversary celebration.

**08/33**            AOB

The Group agreed that they should seek a meeting with the JNCC and Natural England. Julian offered to seek a contact individual within JNCC. Names suggested by Nigel Maxted were Ian Taylor and Tom Tew.

Richard Ellis resigned from the Group, wishing them good luck and promised to circulate his paper on survival at low-moisture content. He also offered to supervise research students if it was possible.

Brian Ford-Lloyd asked the Group if they would mind considering or highlighting to colleagues some available positions within his Department via the Groups email list. They are currently recruiting in Biosciences for the position of lecturer, reader, chair and ecology etc. Mike Ambrose had no problem with this as it clearly fell under the remit of the Group to act as a forum for the exchange of information.

**08/34**            Date of next meeting was set for the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

16 April 2009

**Julian Jackson**

**15/12/2008**