

UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 21 March 2012 Room 210, Ergon House

Nigel Maxted (NM) Chair – Uni of B'ham	Matt Ordidge (MO) – Uni of Reading
Mike Ambrose (MA) – JIC	Lydia Smith (LS) - NIAB
Charlotte Allender (CA) – Uni of Warwick	
Nial Green (NG) - SASA	
Ruth Eastwood (RE) – RBG Kew	
Lorenzo Maggioni (LM) – ECPGR	
Ianto Thomas (IT) – IBERS	Julian Jackson (JJ) - Defra
Mike Camlin (MC) – AFBINI	Farhana Amin (FA) - Defra
Brian Ford-Lloyd (BFL) – Uni of B'ham	Louisa Bagshaw (LB) - Defra
Sean May (SM) –Uni of Nottingham	Bill Lyons (BL) - Defra

12/01 Apologies (NM)

Abi Johnson (AJ)	Feli Fernandez (FF) - EMR
Bob Sherman (BS)	Penny Maplestone (PM) - BSPD
Neil Munro (NM)	Gavin Ramsay (GR)
Simon Linington (SN)	Milika Buurman (MB)–BSPB/Limagrain
Dave Astley (DA) – Uni of Warwick	George Campbell (GC) – SASA

12/02 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2011 (NM)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Actions:

BL to finalise and arrange publishing

12/03 Matters arising (NM)

All matters arising (natural persons and legal persons, formal arrangements to input into MLS and reporting on MLS and EURISCO accessions were largely covered under other agenda items).

12/04 UKPGR Group Website and GRFA (Portal) (NM)

UKPGR: SM said the UK PGR site had been updated since the last meeting to allow for issues to be debated on line, Google was being utilised for some functions as this provided greater flexibility. The Group discussed other issues including problems with the mailing list and whether there is a problem with registrations to the site if they are not recommended registrations by the UKPGR Group (the Group agreed that access to the mailings and the debate forum should be restricted to the Group and that non active members should be reviewed).

Actions:

SM to restrict access to the debate forum to members

SM to invite all Group to a debate forum and NM will start a debate

SM to deregister site non active registree's

Portal: NM asked JJ for an update on the Portal. JJ said some research had been done into identifying the value of the Portal, any UK commitments to it; and that these had to be considered alongside a recent initiative to centralise all Government websites. Various members of the Group voiced concerns saying that the Portal was a window to UK products and we might be disadvantaged when compared against other countries who maintain an equivalent Portal/information resource. Defra colleagues acknowledged these points and questioned why is the portal so important when so much of the data is out of date. IT pointed out that he had requested updates to be made but they had not been implemented. JJ agreed that there was reputational value in having a unified web presence for UK genetic resources, that the UKPGR is an important independent web presence, but technical and cost issues are driving the review of the Portal.

Actions:

Defra to consider further options related to the Portal

12/05 UK Landrace Conservation and use Concept Note (JJ)

NM confirmed he had met with Defra Chief Scientific Adviser Bob Watson (BW) and discussed UK landraces. BW was supportive of the grant application (to the sum of £600k). Co-financing possibilities were discussed to increase available funds.

Actions:

NM to circulate project proposal to Group for comment and then submit proposal to BW

12/06 Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (MA)

MA said there had been a meeting of stakeholders at Kew on 12 March about the options for implementing the Nagoya Protocol in the UK. Stakeholder views had also been obtained through 20 responses to a questionnaire and 9 interviews as part of an independent study. The options arrived at are non legislative, amend the current rules or dedicated legislation. JJ added that the specifics of the 3 options had yet to be discussed in detail.

12/07 Updating the UK National inventory and EURISCO (IT)

IT said the MLS fields need to be updated and if the updates are sent to him he will arrange this.

Action:

All to send MLS updates to IT

12/08 AEGIS – Associate Membership Agreements (JJ)

JJ confirmed the John Innes Centre's associate membership had been finalised and they were now a member of AEGIS.

12/09 Review of UK PGR Group composition and structure (NM)

NM reminded the Group they had discussed ideas of the format of the Group (e.g. spring meeting links with environment; autumn meeting links with breeders and summer meetings should link with technical matters). He questioned whether there was any strong feeling about extending the Group in view of the limited response to his email seeking further views. In principle the Group supported efforts to strengthen the emphasis on utilisation and saw limited invitations to broaden the Group as worthwhile. Suggestions focused on inviting commercial companies and those from the wider conservation sector; perhaps with focused agenda's so the meeting would be attractive to them.

Actions:

MA, CA, IT and MB to suggest representatives from the commercial breeding sector to invite to the autumn meeting

NM and SL to suggest representatives from the environmental/conservation sector to invite to the spring meeting, these would include RHS (Dr John C David), Natural

England (John Hopkins), JNCC (James Williams), BGCI (Suzanne Sharrock) and Plantlife International (Victoria Chester).

JJ to ensure DFID representative would attend next UKPGR Group meeting.

12/10 Global and European PGR news (NM)

NG said a new SASA database will consolidate existing potato and cereal databases and is expected to go live at the end of the year

MO had just returned an ECPGR Malus-Pyrus Work Group. Discussions covered standardising descriptors.

CA reported there had been a good stakeholder meeting on veg improvement and success in Core Organic II application.

IT said there had been a successful meeting of the ECPGR Forage Work Group in Hungary – they had progressed identification of candidate accessions for the AEGIS programme.

BFL said there had been success in Defra funded CWR project in China. CWR in China catalogued and trying to map resistance of two rice diseases.

MA reported success in securing 5 years of funding for GRU/JIC. The application was accepted in full and another member of staff secured.

MA has been elected as President for National Straw Thatchers. He has helped secure some funding for studies of agronomic traits.

LM reported that CGIAR reform is ongoing and still aligning to different objectives. There are no longer entities focusing on themes (e.g. rice/maize) instead there are horizontal Mega-projects (at different levels of approval). Bioversity International does not have a Mega-project where it is a leader and so the strategy will be to focus on smaller projects. Attempt to attract funds for this sort of work have failed and there is a need to secure portions of the existing Mega-projects. Bioversity International has 4 themes (they are: agro-intensification; nutrition; forest and conservation and availability). Conservation and availability is unfunded and was dependent on a Mega-project which has yet to be funded. Ex situ has been dropped. The regional office for Europe has been terminated. Bioversity hopes to continue with ECPGR and EUFORGEN, however these networks will need to be self sufficient. ECPGR is included in the conservation and availability theme. Genesys is another area where continued funding is likely to cease.

RE said there is now a mailing list for the CWR Project and the website will be launched soon she outlined the 10 year project analysing cold spots for collecting CWR.

LS said NIAB are involved in pre breeding work, maintaining collections of main landrace and CWR for barley – also for some wheat. Landraces are being characterised.

LS told the Group about the 'Innovation Farms' initiative, which is in its second year. Several colleagues in the Group had some involvement. The initiative has some EU funding and she expects workshops and open days about the research to be run so that industry can be engaged.

NM said the EC funded FP7 PGR Secure project is progressing with CWR WP funding national conservation strategies for a number of countries. The first annual meeting of CWR WP was a few weeks ago.

NM reported there is a new EU funded conservation project - Reinforcing cooperation between the Royal Botanic Garden of Jordan and the European Research Area (BOT-ERA), which also involves the RBG and Kew.

NM is working as a consultant for Bioversity on an application for a project on CWR conservation in sub-Saharan.

NM said the 'Darwin' application had failed as there was not enough co-financing built in.

NM reported that there had recently been established an FAO task force on agricultural indicators and he would attend the initial workshop in Madrid in April.

NM reported that he attended the IUCN committee Chairs meeting in Abu Dhabi and that a new priority for IUCN was food security.

NM said that as part of the Global Crop Diversity Trust CWR Project the University of Birmingham had created a global database of CWR priority taxa (based on crop gene-pools and taxon groups). The priorities were being identified with expert input – the database is available at www.CWRdiversity.org and a final list will be available shortly. This work will help develop a network of global in situ CWR and further ex situ priorities.

12/11 Member applications/project news (NM)

Covered in 12/10.

12/12 Summer Technical Visit (NM)

IT said the phenomics centre in IBERS is due to open and the Welsh Botanic Garden are keen to host a visit from the Group at some point and NM noted a possibility to visit NIAB.

Actions:

MA to organise a visit to Limagrain after harvest and possibly combine with a visit to NIAB.

12/13 AOB (NM)

LB said that Defra were going through an internal re-organisation and this would transitionally take effect from 1 April – September. The Group should see no practical changes to business.

MO said the collections of the late Frank Bisby were still managed at Reading but they may be better stored at MSB and the transfer was being investigated.

NM noted it was MC's last meeting. MC was presented with a card and the Groups best wishes.

Actions:

RE to consider storage of collections mentioned above

12/14 Date of next meeting

3 October 2012.

The group then listened to a presentation by LM on the future development of AEGIS / ECPGR.