

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting
DATE & TIME: Wednesday 10th March 2020 from 12pm – 4pm
LOCATION: DEFRA, London Nobel House, Room 501

Nigel Maxted, University of Birmingham (NM – Chair)
Gerard Hoppe, AFBI Crossnacreevy (GH)
Glenn Bryan, James Hutton Institute (GB)
Matt Ordidge, University of Reading (MO)
Sean May, University of Nottingham (SM)
Lin Huang, Aberystwyth University (LH)
Vicki Cooke, Plant Heritage (VC)
Chris Barker, Defra (CB)

Ian Taylor, Natural England (IT)
Lesley McCarthy, SASA (LM)
Lydia Smith, NIAB EMR (LS)
Solomy Nantege, Defra (SN)
James Williams, JNCC (JW)
Caroline Liddell, Defra (CL)
Noam Chayut, JIC (NC)
John Dickie, Kew (JD)

Dialed in **Catrina Fenton**, Garden Organic (CF), **Rachel Davis**, Defra (RD), **Julian Hosking** (JH), **Felicidad Fernandez**, NIAB EMR (FF), **Charlotte Allender**, University of Warwick (CA), **Simon Toomer**, National Trust (ST), **Karen Thomas**, Defra (KT)

20/01 **Apologies (NM)**
 Danny Thorogood (Aberystwyth University), **Gaynor McKenzie** (James Hutton Institute), **Peter Hoebe** (SCRUC), **Penny Maplestone** (BSPB), **Frances Gawthrop** (Tozer Seeds),

The meeting was chaired by Nigel Maxted (NM).

20/02 **Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2019 (NM)**
The group agreed that the minutes from the previous meeting held on 9th July 2019 reflected a true and accurate account of proceedings.

20/03 **Matters Arising**
NM asked if there was a new timescale for the guidance on the Genetic Resources chapter in the Nature Strategy 2030. This was initially requested of the UKPGR group for autumn 2019 but the exercise was put on hold. **RD** to update the group under the Defra update.

NM also mentioned that he will be circulating the checklist and guidance for preparing the UK National PGR strategy he was supposed to send after the previous meeting.

ACTION: NM to circulate guidance on preparing the UK National PGR Strategy.

20/04 **Updating on the PGR indicator (JW/KT)**
JW reminded the group about the previous discussions held on the current indicator which is based on Enrichment Index data. The group had felt this approach was unsatisfactory and an improved, scientifically justifiable basis was needed. **JW**, together with **LH** and **KT** have been analyzing the EURISCO database for 2013 – 2017 to help inform the development of a clear replacement but were unable to complete this in time for last year's publication. They are however hoping to complete the exercise in time for this year's.

One of the issues with the current indicator is that the calculation of the Enrichment Index requires the country of origin which for many apple varieties e.g. the Defra collection at Brogdale farm it cannot be provided and thus not

being included in the indicator rendering it misrepresentative. There is therefore a need to establish who is responsible for the required information in order to ensure the different living and/or stored collections in gene banks are included in the indicator. **JW** also asked for an update on the previously provided taxonomic list which could possibly be used as a filter into the accessions held by the different gene banks to determine how many accessions there are and track the changes over time, as well as the breadth of conserved taxa. **JW** suggested further discussions to be held to identify what information is relevant for inclusion in the indicator e.g. commercial and public collections, and decide the minimum set of data needed e.g. name and location.

ACTION: **NM** to circulate the agreed taxonomic list.

He also informed the group about meetings being held to discuss the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) request for possible biodiversity targets for 2030 as part of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework within the CBD “Living in harmony with nature” 2050 vision.

20/05

Defra update – including Ag. Bill and Nature Strategy (RD/NM)

The Agriculture Bill now includes a clause on conserving plants grown or used in carrying out agricultural, horticultural or forestry activity which the Group was pleased about. This has recently gone through the Committee stage in Parliament, as well as the Report and 3rd reading stages in the Commons. The team hasn't had any push back so far but anticipates some questions when it reaches the House of Lords. Defra hasn't considered any schemes to be launched under this purpose, but any funding will be under the Government's priorities. **RD** suggested a sub group be formed in the future to discuss suggestions and proposals with stakeholders.

RD agreed that there was limited interaction between the Genetic Resources and Environment Land Management Scheme (ELM) teams currently but was positive there would be, going forward, should an opportunity arise. **NM** suggested including a session on what role the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) could play in the implementation of the genetic resources conservation schemes in the Ag. Bill discussions and asked if the secretariat could arrange for the AHDB team to attend the next UKPGR meeting.

ACTION: **SECRETARIAT** to invite the AHDB team to the next UKPGR meeting.

RD also reminded the group about the Nature Strategy which will be published in spring 2021. Nigel, Matt, Julian, John and Charlotte had previously volunteered to engage on the group's behalf for input on the PGR chapter framework and will thus be contacted soon. Noam asked to also be included in the sub group.

20/06

Orchard network update (MO)

No update to give.

20/07

Update on European funding opportunities (CB)

The UK has now left the EU and is currently in the transition period until end of 2020. This means the UK is officially considered a 3rd country. However, the Withdrawal Agreement that was signed off earlier this year guaranteed UK applicants the right to continue participating in EU programmes signed under the 2014 to 2020 framework for the duration of the programme as full

partners; as well as receive EU funding for any successful bids acquired this year.

CB asked the group to direct any partners questioning the UK's eligibility to participate in these programmes to the European Commission funding and tenders portal which has the latest information.

CB also reminded the group that the Societal Challenge 2 (SC2) 2019 work programme had closed last year, with two new £7million projects on PGR. The call for the 2020 work programme, which included one PGR topic, was closed in January. There will be more information on the outcome later on in the year.

Post Horizon 2020, the government in collaboration with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has developed Horizon Europe, a £100 billion programme which will start in January 2021 and includes a proposed £10billion specifically for research and innovation in food, agriculture, environment and the bio-economy. The programme's pillars of activity were adopted from Horizon 2020. The government published information on post-negotiations on the UK's future with the EU in February 2020, within which it indicated the UK's keenness to consider participation in certain EU programmes where cooperation would be mutually beneficial. This has however not yet been agreed with the EU Commission. BEIS is currently considering alternative funding options should the UK decide not to associate with the programme.

20/08

Seed Summit Meeting (CA)

CA gave an update on the recently concluded 2020 Svalbard Global Seed Summit and the Seed Deposit event held at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV). The vault is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food and run by the Nordic Gene Resource Centre (NordGen) and the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The seed summit was held to mark the Norwegian government's recent 20-million-euro investment in the improvement and refurbishment of the vault e.g. better drainage and temperature control systems as well the commissioning of more seed storage chambers. The 3-day event also included a session on the values and practicalities of PGR conservation, as well as a position statement on the 'Arctic Call to Action on Food Security and Climate Change'.

ACTION: CA to circulate the 'Call to Action' statement.

20/09

SMTA reporting to ITPGRFA (NC)

NC reminded the group about the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) to the Treaty and the difficulties faced by gene banks in using the online automated system for recording data. He highly recommended using the spreadsheet provided by The Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK) centre which he had found quicker and easier.

ACTION: NC to circulate the IPK spreadsheet to the wider group.

20/10

UK National list latest report to FAO (NC)

NC consulted with the group on the recommended guidelines to follow when responding to the recent request from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on national lists as there needed to be more clarity on what and how to report the data. The group asked for alignment in what was being reported to CBD and FAO.

ACTION: CL and JW to separately discuss what was returned to the FAO.

- 20/11** **PGR applications/project news (NM)**
Each member of the UKPGR group gave an update on current projects and activities they were undertaking.
- 21/12** **AOB (including Summer Technical Meeting) (NM)**
- **IT** volunteered to consider the possibility of hosting the next summer technical meeting. **GB** and **NC** also offered should the 1st option be unsuccessful.
 - **LH** was off work for the last 6 months due to a family bereavement and thus asked the group to re-send any indicator data that they may have sent to her in that period.
 - **CA** mentioned that The UK Vegetable Genebank (UKVGB) will be celebrating its 40th anniversary with an event held onsite possibly in September 2020. She will circulate more information as plans progress.
 - **MO** asked if the members had any up-to-date information about Diversity Seek (DivSeek) – a community with the aim of integrating and sharing PGR-related data and information – and whether there were any discussions to form a UK node being held.
- 21/13** **Date of next meeting (NM)** – 21st October 2020