

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting

DATE & TIME: Wednesday 17th March 2021 12pm - 3pm

LOCATION: Via Zoom

Attendees:

Nigel Maxted, University of Birmingham (NM – Chair)
Lesley McCarthy, SASA (LM)
Charlotte Allender, University of Warwick (CA)
Lydia Smith, NIAB EMR (LS)
Joanne Russell, James Hutton Institute (JR)
Glenn Bryan, James Hutton Institute (GB)
Matt Ordidge, University of Reading (MO)
Elizabeth Scott, NIAB (ES)
Sean May, University of Nottingham (SM)
Lin Huang, Aberystwyth University (LH)
Chris Barker, Defra (CB)
Noam Chayut, JIC (NC)
John Dickie, Kew (JD)
Julian Hosking (JH)
Felicidad Fernandez, NIAB EMR (FF)
Sarah Trinder (ST)
Rachel Davis, Defra (RD)
Amelia Greenham, Defra (AG)

Agenda:

21/01 Apologies (NM)

21/02 Minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2020 (NM)

No response

21/03 Actions and Matters arising (NM)

NM: item 20.18- formed a subgroup to start working on the indicator, no progress has been made on this, so the action should be carried over to the next meeting. Suggestion that the subgroup should be more actively involved in this.

MO: James emailed with need for his team to get a better idea of the data that is fed into EURISCO

NC: wants to take part if EURISCO data is discussed

21/04 Update on European funding opportunities (CB)

CB: Confirmation that the UK will be associated with Horizon programme, TCA now agreed, in principle only. European parliament needs to officially ratify, however, Commission have said that the UK will have full access to the programme from the start, even if there is a delay on our official association. Confirmation that the UK will have access on equivalent terms as EU MS, eg same rates. UK Gov will make a financial contribution. 9 billion euros worth of funding over the course of the programme. First programme in mid April will identify areas of research- for 2021 15th of April is the

opening date, will close on the 1st September, 2022 will open 1st October and close in February 2022. First 2 years will have a big focus on biodiversity and enviro-friendly food systems- not specifically dedicated to plant genetic resources. Some focus on crop breeding resilience, development of measures to increase availability of plant genetic resources. Gov is encouraging UK researchers to take advantage of horizon Europe. Innovate will be operating a UK national focus point, and will promote the 6 clusters through webinars. Confirmation that once we are formally associated, we will be able to feed into future work programmes. CB confirmed the UK would not be participating in any other EU programs

21/05 Defra update including Nature Strategy, Agri Act, Schemes, etc. (RD)

RD: Nature strategy: Defra has been working and has committed to publishing biodiversity strategy, under CBD. Strategy likely to be shorter and more high level, but more action focused, draft to be finished by end of Autumn. Work commencing on Agriculture Act schemes- our work does not fit neatly into ELMs ('Public Money for Public Goods'). Would like to set up a Task and Finish group with PGR volunteers, for scheme work to be paid under 1i) of Ag Act

JH: Voiced worry that PGR will get left behind between public and private goods- genetic diversity is a public good- the connection with land management is obvious. We also need to look at the Environment Bill, integrated approach most clearly fits into the ELM scheme, do not want to let PGR be an outlier again.

RD: Suggested it would be good to get a meeting between PGR and ELMs. There is scope for CWR to be planted in field margins, would need justification of their use over wildflowers.

NC: Stated we already have evidence that landraces etc are of benefit to the UK economy.

NM: Asked if we could link any of this work into the upcoming COP.

21/06 Progress with identification and networking of UK PGR *in situ* sites (NM)

NM: Natural England and Ben- Leading team member at the Lizard has left, the site are no longer interested in continuing the work. Natural England still wish to take forward the work on Genetic Reserves, suggested that RD talk to Ben about including other sites, for example the Isle of Purbeck.

JH: Suggested we involve the other bodies that work in these potential sites.

LM: stated from a Scottish point of view, Shetland is important -Maria Scholten is working on a conservation project on Shetland kale.

NM: clarified that the network is for CWR- Scotland is looking at landraces, we need to establish a link between the 2. The Outer Hebrides might be more useful.

LH: stated Welsh Gov is working on fitting conservation into their policy, have to consider marginal land, landscape, Welsh native varieties.

NM: Stated that CWR papers have been published in Wales, also lots of seed savers.

JR: Stated significant activity on Orkney- lots of seed savers and organizations, common grains organization, with James Hutton located in the east of Scotland, they can coordinate a network.

21/07 PGR applications/project news (All)

JD: CWRs project has drawn to a close, lots of things cancelled because of COVID, realignment (restructure) coming up, have been sending things out to pre-breeders, replacement is looking at forages in Pakistan, will report later

LM: Updated on a new project funded by Defra, looking at under-utilized crops. Potential crops will be cereals and grains, legumes, vegetables and tuber, fruits vines and nuts. Looking at the way they might be grown, co-cropping etc.

LH: Imports from UKRI- 5.4 million trees, including a few species of willow, to be used to remove greenhouse gas. Looking to set up sites to look at effectiveness of carbon sequestration- 5-year project.

JR: work mainly with landraces in Bere Barley. Marie Curie scholar looking at soils, have had funding under Scottish government. Worked on field trials on some of the landraces, more organic which meant lots of weeds- difficult location on the west coast, the better varieties are those which are quicker to produce

CA: main project funding news is that the UKVGB project has been extended for 12 months. Still involved in the European evaluation network for vegetables, as a supplier, the VEGIN has a SH meeting on the 1st of April.

CF: have recently been funded by LANTRA to deliver seed saving training to potential commercial growers in Wales.

JH: Nature Safe is a new charity that are looking at tissue banking, may be looking at doing that for farmed animals

LM: Scottish Landrace Protection Scheme is still going strong, both in terms of donations and fulfilling requests

MO: no update, apart from updating the vine collection at Brogdale.

NM: Farmers Horizon 2020 project- unfortunately f2f will not go ahead, still looking to set up a European network of in situ conservation. SADC region project positive as Gov have coordinated approach. Grant from NE on developing a CWR guide, initially for NE Staff but hopefully it will be distributed more widely. NM was employed as a consultant for recommendation for reformulation for policy on seed genetic resource legislation. CGIAR having a review of all their food security activities, helping on this. NM will speak on GR at an FAO conference at the end of March.

21/08 AOB including Orchard Network, July Summer Technical, etc.

Potential for the Summer Technical to be held at Purbeck or at the John Innes Centre at Norwich- will revisit closely to the time, dependent on lockdowns.

21/09 Date of next meeting (NM)

in Mid October- suggested date 13th October 2021- penciled

July 28th for the Summer Technical