

**UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting
29 October 2009**

Minutes

Present:

Mike Ambrose – JIC Niall Green – SASA George Campbell - SASA Michael Camlin - AFBNI Neil Munro Garden Organic Nigel Maxted – Birmingham University Brian Ford-Lloyd - Birmingham Uni.	Charlotte Allender – Warwick HRI Simon Linington – RGB Kew Ianto Thomas –IBERS Matt Ordidge – Reading Uni. Frances Radcliffe Defra Julian Jackson Defra
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09/17 Apologies:

Amanda Read BBSRC	Jack Edgley FERA
Penny Maplestone BSBP	Abi Johnson EMR
Gavin Ramsay SCRI	Felicidad Fernández EMR
Joan Cottrell Forest Research	

09/18 Minutes of the previous meeting held 16 April 2009

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Niall Green commented on item 09/04 to say that he was waiting for a consultation exercise to be announced on the implementation of the seeds directive 98/95/EC on Conservation Varieties with respect to vegetables to be announced. The details and dates will determine how the process is planned and will require FERA and SASA input.

09/19 Matters arising from previous minutes

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

09/20 International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Julian Jackson reported on a series of intersessional meetings dealing with i. issues relating to the rolling out and use of standard MTA's and the formal designation of materials into the Multilateral System, ii. compliance and iii. an *ad hoc* committee meeting of the funding strategy.

Defra as National Coordinator wishes to proceed on the formal registering of materials into the MLS and to collate figures on MTA's issued to be able to answer specific written questions received from the secretariat.

It was asked what level of detail the reporting on sMTA's would take and would they be analysed. Mike Ambrose stated that he thought the reporting was at the level of sector of user eg. researcher and breeders and did not require accession level disclosure. Ianto Thomas stated that there is a list of broad categories of users that could be considered. He went on to remind members that there were

two fields in the UK inventory AEGIS and MLS that could be populated and used for reporting centrally in the future rather than via individual collections.

Action: Julian Jackson would write requesting information on number of entries in the MLS and the number of sMTA's issued.

09/21 Preparation of the 2nd UK Country Report for the State of the World Conference

Julian thanked all those that had helped in providing input into the drafting of the report and in particular Mike Ambrose, Nigel Maxted and Janice Munday. The report had been submitted to FAO for use in the State of the World's PGRFA. After final polishing, the report would be made available and could be uploaded on the Defra GRFA portal. Mike Ambrose noted that during the exercise that the Defra web listing of collections and contact points required some updating and the Group would be only too willing to assist. Nigel Maxted commented that we could also make use of National Trust (NT) surveys of orchards. Now NT were collating all their apple records into a single database, this was now a real resource.

09/22 FP7 Infrastructures proposals (INFRA-2010-1.1.7: Plant Genetic Resources Centres)

Mike Ambrose outlined the current call and thought it useful to get an overview or proposals that Group members were involved in.

- i. Mike Ambrose; working on a Pan-European projects to further the implementation of AEGIS.
- ii. Simon Linington; one under Environment networking/access/research for native species across Europe, has 28 partners. Looking to supply research infrastructure with wild plant species
- iii. Nigel Maxted; Leading on novel methods of characterisation, 15 partners, 4 areas
 - o Novel techniques, Inventory of CWR,
 - o Informatics -linking up with AEGIS
 - o Facilitated use -surveying breeders

Nigel Maxted commented that it was a pity to have lost the GRF ring-fenced funds but this was still a good opportunity. He had also put one in for lifeplus grant, with the idea of setting up CWR reserves in UK and Italy. 4 countries pulled out as they saw no value of CWR. He also went on to state that NE were not over enthusiastic and saw little value in CWR conservation. Mike Ambrose felt that there were individuals in NE who were more positive and the mood of the meeting with the Biodiversity group in May hopefully a better dialogue would help.

09/23 ECPGR External Review (Mike Ambrose)

Mike Ambrose attended 11th steering committee in 2008 at which the UK strongly supported a proposal for an external review the ECPGR as both timely and appropriate given the increase in the number of participating countries and the developments associated with the ITPGRFA and the AEGIS project. He participated in a task force that developed TOR for the review and in the selection of reviewers. He was pleased with the selected candidates who are; Marianne La Four (FRA), Orlando Duponti (NL) Geoff Hawtin (UK) and Thomas Gass (CH) who was a former coordinator of ECPGR who will chair the panel.

09/24 AEGIS UK and Associate membership

Julian Jackson had recently received a letter from the AEGIS secretariat concerning the UK taking up official membership. Mike Ambrose who had represented Defra at the last Steering Committee meeting said that the membership and associate membership documents had been agreed at that meeting following a lengthy prior consultation process. At the time the UK had been content with the text and so was hopeful that the document could be signed to signal our endorsement of this important initiative with significant positive benefits for all parties.

Simon Linington stated that AEGIS was very much focused on the agricultural sector. Nigel Maxted stated that there was a formal offer to BIOVERSITY from Simon Linington to link with the European Seed Conservation Network (Ensconet) but no answer had been forthcoming. Nigel Maxted had lobbied hard to get In-situ included, but this had been rejected. Mike Ambrose suggested collecting together these views and circulating them to gain support with a view to seeking discussion on these points at the next ECPGR Steering Committee meeting. Charlotte Allender was due to attend the Vegetable Network meeting next week where AEGIS was on the agenda and would raise the issue.

Action: The UK to agree to UK Membership and the letter for associate membership to be redistributed to UK collaborating institutions.

09/25 UK National Inventory of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Ianto Thomas provided a verbal update on the recent revision of datasets from UK collections which had been uploaded to the EURISCO server the previous month. After consultation with Sean May, the entries from the Nottingham Arabidopsis Stock Centre had been reduced to 198,000. The numbers for some of the other collections stood at; JIC 26,000, NFC 3,900 and MSB 46,000. He reported that Bioversity (managers of EURISCO) were planning to run new software analyses to improve the quality of data. Original data sources would be contacted to participate and comment on this in the New Year.

Mike Ambrose agreed with undertaking a yearly revision, and suggested that we could start the updating in April, with a view to completing around September. Mike Ambrose underlined the importance of this work and thanked Ianto and IBERS for his work on the Groups behalf.

09/26 UK Landrace Conservation and use Concept Note (Nigel Maxted)

The 2003 scoping exercise had identified the urgency in needing to conserve material now as average of keeper is over 70. Kath Bainbridge had secured a small amount of money for a Vegetable Landrace Inventory in England and Wales. The short timescale meant that by the time links had been established the project had come to an end. The particular time frame came at a particularly busy time for many growers who were thus unable to fully engage with the project. This left a number of elements of the work incomplete and therefore a concept note had been developed to capture the remaining element of the work required which included comparing the new material to that already maintained in gene banks, establishing regional networks of users and stimulating use of LR. He envisaged that this would involve the input of many of the members of the Group. New elements were detailed including i. review of allotments and other refugia, ii. quantification of erosion, iii. establishment of landrace protection scheme such as the one in Scotland, iv. Socio-economic analysis, v. diversity analysis. Comments from within the Group had been positive but further refinement of the objectives and work plan was required including a ranking of priorities and timetables. Frances Radcliffe commented that it was important to highlight the importance to Defra priorities within the document eg. food security and climate change. Michael Camlin commented that this was a timely proposal given a Royal Society report emphasizing food security. Frances Radcliffe suggested that once the concept note was ready it should be submitted with a covering letter from the Group.

Action: Nigel Maxted to lead in redrafting the concept note with the assistance of interested Group members.

09/27 Agrobiodiversity / Biodiversity Joint Meeting (Nigel Maxted)

Following the very successful joint meeting between members of the UKPGR and the Biodiversity community coordinated by John Hopkins Mike Ambrose had been in touch with John to follow up on progress and to maintain some momentum. Nigel Maxted had been in touch on the specific item of a joint grant proposal but felt further contacts within NE were needed. Simon Linington felt it might be useful to meet with John Hopkins's boss that's where the funding is stopping. Both Nigel and Simon felt that there was nothing to lose in inviting more senior level participation to a follow up meeting. Niall Green added that the focus in Scotland is now on habitat so all the relevant contacts and machinery needed to be re-established.

Action: Mike Ambrose to arrange for a follow up meeting.

09/28 Standing Committee for Farm Animal Genetic Resources Meeting (Mike Ambrose)

Mike Ambrose reported on his recent attendance of a meeting of the FAnGR in September. He commented that this had been a very useful meeting in which he was able to outline the scope, membership and operational working of the UKPGRG and something of its history together with some reasons for the

resources which it had secured for PGRFA of which the FAnGR were envious. Mike's response to this was that it had taken many years of working with Defra and its policy aims to achieve this. He noted the very useful website of the FAnGR and their sub groups for taking forward and covering a wide ground. This appeared in part to be due to the fact that this was a relatively new entity and which was trying to cover a lot of areas and issues in parallel. He used the occasion to raise the issue of hosting a joint meeting with plant and animal and microbial sectors as a follow up to the Harvesting diversity meeting of 2004.

09/29 Harvesting Diversity II (Mike Ambrose)

Mike Ambrose had raised the matter at a recent FAnGR meeting and the suggestion had been positively received. The proposal would be further discussed by the group with a view to coming to a decision at their next meeting. Mike had also been in contact with David Smith at CABI from the microbial side and he was positive in supporting the initiative.

09/30 Summer Technical Visit (Mike Ambrose)

Mike Ambrose expressed thanks on behalf of those members of the Group to Matthew Ordidge and colleagues at Reading and NFC Brogdale and to Simon and colleagues at RBG Millennium Seedbank for very interesting and informative presentations and demonstrations.

Mike asked the Group for suggestions for next year and wondered whether we might be able to include a visit to in situ site.

Action: Group members to think of suggestions for suitable sites.

09/31 AOB

Julian Jackson stated that there was money set aside for the UKGRFA Portal and asked for suggestions from the Group. Simon Linington asked how much was available after maintenance. The answer was a little but this should not stop ideas for improvements from being made to help in the future funding case. Matt Ordidge requested updates for links to be made to the Portal. Simon Linington commented that it was important to make sure the portal was well publicized.

Charlotte Allender had heard a talk by Geoff Tansy who is interested in ITPGRFA, food security and IPR and protecting rights of those supplying. She thought he might make a good speaker to invite to talk to the Group following one of their meetings.

Nigel Maxted suggested Kate Merry (RHS) would also be a possible speaker to talk about her work on orchards.

Matt Ordidge asked whether there was any movement on policy documents on SMTA? Mike Ambrose said that a draft letter outlining the background and responsibilities associated with issuing of SMTA had been prepared jointly

between the Group and Martyn Ibbotson. The letter was requested as a means of enabling curators to seek the institutional support adopt and implement the issuing of sMTA's. Now it is being actively used the requirement for such a letter was thought to be no longer required.

Matt Ordidge went on to comment on two issues that arose at NFC. Firstly the use of a footnote as used by CGIARCS, for non-annex 1. Secondly he was still seeking a resolution on how to deal with PVR material where the IPR of plant breeders rights will still be current.

Nigel Maxted commented that in the past the Group had better representation from other sectors such as DFID and Bioversity which had fallen away over recent years. He felt this was to the detriment of Group discussions. Mike Ambrose said that the representation was often linked to a particular person with a personal interest in attending and in changes is emphasis of policy within some of the organizations. He would look into this issue and asked for suggestions from the Group for possible individuals that could be approached.

09/32 Date of next meeting was agreed for the 16th March 2010.