

UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 16 October 2013 Room 101 Nobel House

Attendees:	Adrian Turner, John Innes
Felicidad Fernandez, EMR	Nigel Maxted, University of Birmingham (Chair)
Charlotte Allender, University of Warwick	Sean May, University of Nottingham
Ianto Thomas, IBERS	Sophie Leguil, Plant Heritage
Tom Christie, SASA	Rosie Hamer, Defra
Matt Ordidge, University of Reading	Julian Jackson, Defra
Milika Buurman, Limagrain UK	Bill Lyons, Defra
Mike Ambrose, John Innes	Chris Barker, Defra
Ruth Eastwood, Kew	
Apologies:	Gavin Ramsay, Hutton
Peter Brotherton, Natural England	Neil Munro, Heritage Seed Library
Trevor Gilliland, AFBINI	Abi Johnson, East Malling Research
Lydia Smith, NIAB	Simon Linnington, Kew
Mercy Morris, Plant Heritage	Brian V Ford-Lloyd, University of Birmingham
Penny Maplestone, British Society of Plant Breeders	John David, RHS

13/17 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2013 (NM)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Actions:

BL/SM to arrange publishing.

13/18 Matters arising (NM)

It was noted that LS had attended and spoken at the 'Stimulating Innovation in Plant Genetic Resources' conference on 23 April in Brussels, but was not present to provide an update.

13/19 UK Landrace Conservation and use Concept Note (NM)

NM said that, based on earlier research projects (two projects funded by Defra one in 2003 which identified unique landraces of cereals and forages, and the second in 2008 that was limited to Veg in Eng and Wales) which had identified unique varieties and risks of loss of diversity, there was a need for a national inventory. This concern has been discussed with the former Defra Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) who had indicated support for submitting a proposal for work towards an inventory and the conservation of landraces. The proposal has been developed taking into account more recent feedback (fully considering all possibilities for funding, reducing the costs, alignment to Defra's four new priorities and the involvement of industry).

JJ said that the proposal will need to consider the applicability of the Agri Tech Strategy, the new CSA is in principle supportive of conserving genetic resources, more recently the Defra policy Director responsible for PGR is supportive but as evidence funding is decreasing all the time, the possibilities of funding from different sources will need to be considered and explored (possible funding sources include Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), Prince of Wales charities and supermarkets). NM said that it had not been possible to engage supermarkets in the past but MB suggested Waitrose might be willing to engage and that she could provide a point of contact. NM added that if the inventory was not delivered soon material was in danger of being lost forever.

Actions:

JJ: Provide NM with a Defra steer for further developing the proposal

13/20 Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (JJ)

JJ gave a brief update on the EU implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. The key issues being tackled at the moment are retroactivity, checkpoints, prohibition, access, best practice elements, use of the SMTA for non Annex 1 material, breeders rights and new material. As the EU proposal develops the PGR community should be prepared to engage and lobby for PGR concerns to be reflected if the need arises.

13/21 Updating the UK National Inventory and EURISCO (IT)

IT said the UK deadline to update its inventory information into EURISCO was 21 March, in time for the ITPGRFA Governing Body. Information from 8 institutions had been uploaded, but data from Kew and SASA had not been made available. The UK PGR group can view the data in Google by clicking on the link 'National plant Inventory Fusionable' on the UK PGR site. The Google facility and site provides better search and summary facilities than EURISCO, Google is more flexible than the Portal and is more up to date than the Portal. MA questioned the on-going future of the Portal when Google offers a better service. The group discussed the risks of using Google, SM suggested that he (or the provider institutions) held the original data and that Google normally give users good notice of any change in service.

Actions:

IT: Email link to data on Google to all UK PGR (completed 17 Oct)

SM: To insert link to Google site on UK PGR (completed 17 Oct)

BL: Ensure the future of the Portal is on the next UK PGR meeting agenda

13/22 ECPGR Update (JJ)

JJ said the hosting institutes for ECPGR and EURISCO are respectively the undertaken by the Global Crop Diversity Trust and Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research. Accordingly ECPGR is moving from Rome to Global Crop Diversity Trust in Bonn, but arrangements need to be finalised before EURISCO can move.

NM asked the Group for their views on the future of the ECPGR Working Groups on 'In situ' and 'On-farm' Conservation. In times of limited budgets and requirement of clarity of focus there had been some discussion of closure of the two WGs. However, both WGs are currently operating without cost to the ECPGR Secretariat. NM was concerned closure of these WGs would provide the wrong message for European PGRFA given the rising interest in in situ and on-farm conservation and also that this issue was not being discussed openly within the PGR community. The Group agreed that two WGs continue to play an essential role in European PGRFA conservation and closure would be counter productive. Both WGs have been very successful in attracting external funding for their activities and the dropping the WGs would take away the status and their 'seal of approval' which would likely hinder future funding applications. MA said that as Chair of the ECPGR Legume Working Group he had done what he could to generate support for continuance of these Work Groups.

Actions:

JJ: To confirm if ECPGR proposals do recommend excluding the in situ (or any) Work Groups and if so prepare a letter to ECPGR defending the retention of these Work Groups

UK PGR: Before the end of Oct provide any comments to CB, or direct to the EU Commission, on proposals for the first Horizon 2020 work programmes

13/23 Preparations for Plant Treaty Governing Body (JJ)

JJ said he had attended the Fifth Session of the Governing body on the ITPGRA in Muscat on 24 – 28 Sept; developments included:

- Agreement secured to consider and develop measures to enhance the MLS
- No agreement to fund further meetings on MLS and SMTA
- Resolution of the Funding Strategy was agreed
- The resolution on Compliance approved a (voluntary) reporting format and Rules of Procedure for the Compliance Committee, and elected Committee members
- Agreement to a programme of work for the next 4 years on Sustainable use of PGRFA, including the development of a toolbox which would include elements relevant to the Implementation of Farmers' Rights

13/24 PGR applications/project news (NM)

- CB said that Horizon 2020 will fund collaborative research to address a range of societal challenges including food security, sustainable agriculture, climate action and environment protection. It is anticipated that final EU agreement on the programme package will be achieved in the coming weeks, and the first work programme calls for proposals to be published on 11 December. Formal launch of the programme will be on 1 January 2014. The Commission is currently developing the work programmes, with Member State input. The UK is engaged in the consultation by representations on the EU Societal Challenge 2 and 5 Programme Committees comprising Defra and the Food Standards Agency and Defra and the Natural Environment Research Council respectively. UKPGR is likely to have interest in the programmes:
 - Challenge 2 (Food security etc.) where priority is expected to be given to topics in 2014-15 that address sustainable food security, blue growth (martine) and an innovative, and sustainable and inclusive bioeconomy. These include those addressing genetic resources and agricultural diversity, and crop productivity and genetics for sustaining agriculture
 - Challenge 5 (Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials) where activities will contribute to increasing European competitiveness, raw materials security and improving well-being, whilst assuring environmental integrity, resilience and sustainability, taking action on global warming and enabling ecosystems and society to adapt to climate change and other environmental changes
- SM said Uni of Nottingham had made an application to BBSRC to cover work for a germplasm module (propose several hubs for better distribution – and not one central point). On request they have resubmitted their application and are still awaiting a response
- MO said Uni of Reading are preparing to submit a bid for the Defra tendered National Fruit Collections contract
- SL said Plant Heritage are looking for funding to help on a project about threatened ornamental plants
- TC said SASA are looking forward to collaborating on the fruit and vegetable landrace project when funding is finally obtained
- IT said IBERS will be taking on a breeders oat collection
- CA said Uni of Warwick is:
 - preparing for the Defra tendering of the next Veg Gene Bank contract
 - involved in the closing stages of a CWR project focused on carrots
- MA said John Innes has:
 - Hosted a pea CWR event
 - Anticipates new collections of wheat being accessed into the collection for curation
- FF said EMR are repropogating three fruit collections and have further characterisation and verification work to do
- JJ said Defra have confirmed their intention to support a consortium setting up a proposal related to the Commission's DG Agri call for tender 'Preparatory Action – EU plant and animal

genetic resources in agriculture' – a replacement for the former EU GENRES project Council Regulation 870/2004

- NM said:
 - Uni of Birmingham had obtained (€1m) an ACP-EU crop wild relative proposal (led by Bioversity International) to conserve CWR diversity in southern Africa
 - €120k funding from the Norwegian Gov. will fund a 3 year to conserve Norwegian CWR diversity
 - An application for a similar project CWR in Finland has also been made
 - The PGR Secure consortium and the European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA) have recently announced the joint international conference on utilization and conservation of CWR and landrace diversity for crop improvement. The conference will be held at NIAB Innovation Farm, Cambridge, UK, 16-21 June 2014. Conference themes include characterization techniques, conservation strategies, facilitating CWR and landrace use and informatics development. During the course of the conference delegate will be visiting John Innes Centre for an event on the use of CWR in breeding
 - NM is currently working as a consultant for the FAO developing a feasibility study for the establishment of a Global Network for the in situ Conservation of CWR and LR.
 - Members of the Group may also be interested in a recent European Parliament Report (Technology Options for Feeding 10 Billion People) – it has an interesting section on genetic resources <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/cms/studies>

Actions:

CB: To provide UK PGR, via JJ/BL, with the next Commission version of the Horizon 2020 work programmes and information about a proposed 'Information Day' on Challenges 2 and 5

13/25 WCMC Indicators Work Shop feedback and gene bank duplication arrangements (JJ)

JJ said there had not been a Work Shop since the last UK PGR meeting in March.

JJ presented a paper 'Collection viability strategies in UK genetic resource collections' explaining that the UK Government is committed to reporting against global, regional and national frameworks which aim to address biodiversity loss. The indicator that has been developed aims to show the level of conservation in UK PGR, by reflecting the genetic diversity of *ex situ* target plants held in UK germplasm collections, taking into account the threat of losing reference material through reduced seed viability. NM asked why we could not use the FAO indicators; if we have our own indicators as well we would need to report twice.

Global Crop Diversity Trust supported by the Government of Norway and the Nordic Gene Bank facility located at Svalbard provides a back-up for existing gene bank collections. JJ asked the Group whether there was any opportunity for UK PGR to offer political support to the Trust in the form of having UK accessions included in the back-up storage facilities. MA said that we would be considering an opportunity to do so in the new year.

Action:

JJ: To consider the proposal to use the FAO indicator for reporting on Government commitments

13/26 New Contracts for the National Fruit Collections and the Vegetable Gene Bank

BL said that the two current contracts for these collections expire in March 2014 and Defra are making arrangements for new contracts to be in place from April 2014. The old contracts cannot

be simply rolled over because the services required and the resources available have changed significantly and these matters will impact on the content of the future contracts.

13/27 Summer Technical Visit (NM)

Lack of time has prevented the planned visit to IBERS and NBGW but IT hoped this might be arranged next Summer.

Actions:

MA/MB/CA: To confirm breeders that will be asked to deliver a presentation on “Priority trait to new variety” at the next Autumn UK PGR meeting.

13/28 AOB (NM)

MO asked if a PhD student could attend a UK PGR meeting. The Group agreed the student could attend as an observer providing that they can present their aims to the UK PGR Group, that the UK PGR can see/agree the student’s account of the meeting and that the student returns to a future UK PGR meeting to present the results of their research.

It was noted that BFL had just retired and would therefore resign from the UK PGR Group. The Group thanked Brian for his significant contribution over the years to UK PGR and wished him a happy and extended retirement.

Action:

NM: To advise the student they can attend a UK PGR meeting under these conditions

13/29 Date of next meeting (NM)

The date of the next UK PGR meeting is 19 March 2014.

13/30 Presentation about the Agri Tech Strategy (RH)

Action:

RH: Confirm can AHDB/HDC levy funds be used to as match funding for Agri Tech funds

13/31 Presentation about Defra funded Genetic Improvement Networks (MA/CA)

13/32 Presentation about Adapting to Climate Change (RE)