

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting
DATE & TIME: Wednesday 18th October 2023, 12:30-15:30
LOCATION: MS Teams

Nigel Maxted , Univ. of Birmingham (NM – Chair)	John Dickie , Kew MSB (JD)
Gaynor McKenzie , James Hutton Institute (GM)	Sharon Balding , Kew MSB (SB)
Noam Chayut , John Innes Centre (NC)	Steve Morgan , Defra (SM)
Lin Huang , Aberystwyth University (LH)	Helen Riordan , Defra (HR)
Frances Gawthrop , Tozer Seeds (FG)	Elizabeth Scott , NIAB (ES)
Alex Prendergast , Natural England (AP)	Lydia Smith , NIAB EMR (LS)
Felicidad Fernandez , NIAB (FF)	Kalani Seymour , Plant Heritage (KS)
Catrina Fenton , Garden Organic (CF)	Matt Ordidge , Univ. of Reading (MO)
Sarah Trinder , Univ. Warwick (ST)	Sean May , Univ. of Nottingham (SM)
Nick Fenby , Univ. Warwick	Liz Edwards
Caroline Liddell , Defra (CL)	Solomy Kaweesi , Defra (SK)
Wendy Maxim , Defra (WM)	Jason Pollock , Defra (JP)

23/24 Apologies (NM)

Charlotte Allender (Univ. Warwick); Lin Huang (Aberystwyth)
The meeting was chaired by Nigel Maxted (NM).

23/25 Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June (NM)

The secretariat mistakenly shared the minutes of the meeting held in March instead of the minutes of the meeting held in June, so these could not be commented on.

Action Secretariat: Share minutes of the June meeting for comment from the group by email.

23/26 Actions and Matters arising (NM)

This item could not be discussed as the June minutes and actions were not shared.

23/27 Target Operating Model (JP)

Jason Pollock of Defra's Borders and Boundaries team presented the Border Target Operating Model which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-border-target-operating-model-august-2023>

The presentation slides cannot be shared but all the relevant information is covered in detail in a series of online training sessions which aim to prepare traders for the new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) import controls (certification and border checks) within the new Border Target Operating Model (BTOM). These can be found in this YouTube playlist of Defra webinars <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLouExecY1Knf2503WdAcqJ1JiTtFiYQql>

Discussion

NC had sent in some questions in advance mainly regarding PEACH, namely:
How can one change their account details (still using predecessor's details in a temporary solution suggested by APHA in 2018)?

- JP advised continuing with predecessor's details as PEACH is being phased out in next 4-5 months. JP also advised registering for IPAFFS which will replace PEACH and to have accounts linked. More info on IPAFFS at this link:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/import-of-products-animals-food-and-feed-system>

How is PEACH alerted by users (we ask couriers to alert us when we import seed lots, but we have no knowledge or control over it to intervene if there are any problems)?

- JP explained that there is no direct link between the courier and the importer for the notifications that go out via PEACH. It might be available in the future for nominated contacts to be provided with updates. In the meantime, he recommended contacting the courier direct.

We are sometimes asked by (American) couriers for the preferred port of entry (for seed). Any information on the possible current options would be helpful.

- JP shared a link to the USDA's website with information on plant inspection stations for export to the United States
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/import-information/pis/ct_plant_inspection_stations

FF: When will plant health services be able to provide testing suitable to allow export to EU?

- More detail on organisms being tested required to answer this question fully, JP offered to discuss offline. In general, for small consignments to the EU the European Commission's stance is that there must be a phytosanitary certificate as well as any additional requirements. However, there is dispensation within EU legislation to allow small consignments to move without certificates with each competent authority allowed to make those decisions for their own country. As far as we are aware no country has implemented or advertised this concession.

FF referring to clonal material which is alive at the time of transport.

- JP advised that Defra has been challenging EU about what tests they need, especially where a test doesn't exist, they have been asking for the expectation in terms of methodology etc.

NM asked JP and team to consider the impact that any measures would have on collaborative breeding projects in funding schemes such as Horizon Europe and ensuring the UK remains an attractive partner for such projects and collaboration.

LS asked about the difference between high and medium risk categories.

- JP advised that the requirements for high and medium risk categories are the same in terms of phytosanitary certificates, pre-notification and entry through border control post. The difference is the frequency of checks, with high risk material checked more frequently.

ES explained the issue with the assumption that we are actively importing samples, as research organisations we are receiving samples and import is under control of sender.

- JP would like to pick this up offline to understand the nuances of the issue.

NC raised the issue of sub-sampling for some material and the need for an exception to be made for small samples. Genebanks and universities exchange material as collaborators and have a good understanding of phytosanitary issues and plant health.

- JP explained that with IPAFFS the sample rate for goods selected for inspection has been reduced to 10%. They are looking into exemptions that could be put into place for smaller consignments as well as for seeds that are not intended for planting.

NC asked about the need for import permits.

- JP advised that the legislation is clear regarding the requirements and that there is no need for an import permit. All the requirements associated with specific goods are set out on the plant health portal.

Jason is happy to respond to any further queries that were not answered during this meeting. Please email planthealthuexitqueries@defra.gov.uk

Other relevant links and resources

Link to further info on Authorised Operator Status, which would allow eligible traders to manage their own SPS risks and to carry out their own physical and identity checks, provided they meet certain eligibility criteria such as completion of prescribed training. <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/index.php/trade/imports/target-operating-model-tom/authorised-operator-status-aos/>

Video on Authorised Operator Status https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ogcR5pg_PQ

Link to Defra's UK Plant Health Information Portal on frequency of plant health import inspections across GB <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/trade/imports/imports-from-the-eu/import-fees/frequency-of-plant-health-import-inspections-across-gb-from-22-july-2022/>

Link to Defra's UK Plant Health Information Portal on import fees - <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/trade/imports/imports-from-the-eu/import-fees/>

Link to Defra's UK Plant Health Information Portal on import special requirements <https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/trade/imports/imports-from-the-eu/import-requirements/import-special-requirements/>

23/28 Review of Terms of reference and group invite list (NM)

The group's terms of reference can be found here http://ukpgrg.org/ukpgrg_terms_of_reference.pdf

Again, because the actions of the last meeting were not shared with the group in time, this item was not concluded and will continue via email and at the next meeting.

SK shared the actions of the previous meeting via the teams chat and LS, KS, ES and SM updated on their actions.

Actions from previous meeting with updates:

- Lydia to contact Elsoms Seeds, Processors and Growers Research Organisation
 - LS: Elsoms Seeds keen to be involved.
- Kalani to approach the National Trust and Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to gauge interest and identify potential representatives for NM to formally invite.
 - KS: National Trust and RHS do not want to join.
- Elizabeth to contact Sam Brooke from British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB).
 - ES: Sam Brooke has left BSPB, will follow up with replacement.
- Amelia to contact Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI).
 - No update
- Nigel to contact Joan Cottrell from Forestry Commission and Mike Parker from Scottish Agricultural Science Agency (SASA).
 - NM contacted Mike Parker (SASA) and they were keen to still be represented in the UK PGR Group and would nominate a named individual in due course.
 - NM tried to contact Joan Cottrell about Forestry Commission membership, but received no response but will keep trying.
- Lin to contact the National Botanic Garden of Wales
 - No update
- Sean to share the list of members from 2001 to help identify previously active organisations and ensure their areas of interest are covered in future meetings for wider inclusion.
 - SM shared list via teams chat (copied below).

- Nigel suggested reviewing the terms of reference after the above actions are complete to ensure they are still fit for purpose, especially for new members. To be discussed at October's meeting.

List of organisations/institutes that are currently represented in the group, shared by SM via the teams chat. These are:

- Aberystwyth University
- Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute Northern Ireland (DARD-NI)
- BBSRC
- British Society of Plant Breeders
- CGIAR Biodiversity
- DFID
- East Malling Research
- Elsom Seeds
- FERA
- Forest Research (Forestry Commission)
- Garden Organic (HDRA)
- James Hutton Institute (SCRI)
- John Innes Research Centre
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- Limagrain
- Millenium Seed Bank, Royal Botanic Garden, Kew
- National Arabidopsis Stock centre
- National Institute of Agricultural Botany
- National Trust
- Natural England
- Natural History Museum
- Plant Network
- Rothamstead
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture
- Scotland's Rural College
- Tozer seeds
- University of Aberystwith (IGER)
- University of Birmingham
- University of Reading National Fruit Collection (Imperial / Wye College)
- University of Warwick (HRI)

NM would like to understand why some organisations do not want to be members of this group when they have an obvious interest in PGR, to be discussed at next meeting. FF advised that not everyone has the autonomy in their jobs to join meetings on behalf of their organisations.

Action Secretariat: to contact Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) and DFID in FCO.

Action Nigel: to contact Joan Cottrell from Forestry Commission.

Action Lin: to contact the National Botanic Garden of Wales

Action Elizabeth: to follow up with Sam Brooke's replacement at BSPB

Action Secretariat: include agenda item to review the terms of reference after the above actions are complete to ensure they are still fit for purpose, especially for new members.

23/29 Defra Update (CL)

Rapid Evidence Assessment

Defra commissioned a rapid evidence assessment on the value of crop wild relatives and landraces. This was carried out by ADAS and is now completed and going through internal clearances to be published on the Defra Science Website. There was interest from the group to see the report before it was published.

Action Secretariat: to share a copy of the report with the group.

PGR Schemes

The PGR team has had positive communications with internal Defra colleagues on including *in situ* conservation of CWR and LR's in scheme options with work on this hopefully picking up in November. The secretariat may reach out to interested parties to discuss current options. NM recommended including Ben Le Bas (Natural England) in these discussions.

Genebank Contracts

The pea genebank contract awarded to the John Innes Centre. It is a 4-year contract with the option to extend for two further 4-year periods for a total of 12 years (4+4+4y).

The vegetable genebank contract has been extended by a year with University of Warwick while a similar 12-year (4+4+4y) contract is put in place.

The national fruit collection contract is due for renewal in 2024. This is the final of three allowable 5-year extensions within the 15-year contract (5+5+5y). Brogdale farm which houses the collection is for sale. The Defra lease will remain in place until 2041 with the contractual right to renew for a further 25 years after that, even if the land is sold.

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

The 10th Governing Body meeting of the ITPGRFA is in Rome from 20-25th November, with European Regional meetings on 18th and 19th November. Agenda items of particular interest to Defra include the enhancement of the multilateral system for access and benefit sharing which will consider the incorporation of digital sequence information (DSI). The Treaty team is working more closely with Defra's CBD team, especially the DSI leads, on this item. Members of UKPGR are invited to join the Defra CBD team's business advisory group on DSI which to date is largely made up of representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. The secretariat agreed to send out further information by email and to invite members to join the next business advisory group meeting on Monday 23rd October.

Action Secretariat: to send out further info on the CBD team's DSI business advisory group

Solomy on Maternity Leave

This was Solomy's last week at work before going on maternity leave.

The group all wished her well.

23/30 CWR Horizon Europe Application and UK CWR conservation (NM)

23/31 Link between ex situ and in situ genebanking and collections (NM)

NM gave a presentation on these three items (23/30 and 23/31).

The slides will be shared with the minutes.

23/32 State of Nature report (NM)

NM drew the group's attention to JNCC's recently published "State of Nature" report which can be found here <https://jncc.gov.uk/news/state-of-nature-2023/>. Regrettably, genetic resources of either plants or animals were not included. CL gave an update on the Genetic Resources Strategy. The team is currently preparing a submission to Secretary of State to request permission to develop a standalone strategy for genetic resources for plants and animals for food and agriculture.

Action Secretariat: to report back progress to next UK PGR Group meeting.

23/33 PGR applications / Project updates (All)

Each member of the UKPGR group gave an update on current projects and activities they were undertaking.

23/34 AOB (NM) - Venue for summer technical 2024

GM offered to host the summer technical at the James Hutton Institute in either late June or early July, to showcase the new barley hub which is due for completion in early 2024.

Action GM: to provide secretariat with some options of suitable dates for a visit to be shared via doodle poll with the group.

NM suggested discussing at the next meeting whether UKPGR meetings should be in person, face-to-face or a combination. The discussion should conclude with a poll to vote on the format of the meetings.

ST shared a link in the teams chat for GRIN Global to search for accessions of interest in the Warwick UKVGB collection <https://grin-global.warwick.ac.uk/gringlobal/search>.

FF advised via the teams chat that East Malling Research no longer exists as they are part of NIAB now. This will be reflected in the participants list accordingly.

23/35 Date of next meeting – March 2024 (NM)

The date of the next meeting is 13th March 2024. This will be in-person in London.