

**UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting**  
**DATE & TIME: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 14:00 – 17:00**  
**LOCATION: NIAB EMR – New Road, East Malling, ME19 6BJ**

**Nigel Maxted**, Univ. of Birmingham (NM – Chair)  
**Chris Byrne**, Scottish Government (CB)  
**Lin Huang**, Aberystwyth University (LH)  
**Felicidad Fernandez**, NIAB EMR (FF)  
**Catrina Fenton**, Garden Organic (CF)  
**Kalani Seymour**, Plant Heritage (KS)  
**Matt Ordidge**, Univ. of Reading (MO)  
**Sean May**, Univ. of Nottingham (SM)  
**Amanda Kalstrom**, NIAB EMR (AK)  
**Suzanne Litthauer**, NIAB EMR (SL)  
**Abi Johnson**, NIAB EMR (AJ)

**Paul Shaw**, JHI (PS)  
**John Dickie**, Kew (JD)  
**Noam Chayut**, JIC (NC)  
**Ed Cockman**, Defra (EC)  
**Chris Barker**, Defra (CB)  
**Elizabeth Scott**, NIAB (ES)  
**Caroline Liddell**, Defra (CL)  
**Solomy Nantege**, Defra (SN)  
**Lydia Smith**, NIAB EMR (LS)  
**Dan Sargent**, NIAB EMR (DS)  
**Amelia Greenham**, Defra (AG)

**22/13 Apologies (NM)**

Glenn Bryan – JHI, James Williams – JNCC, Lesley McCarthy – SASA, Frances Gawthrop – Tozer Seeds, Peter Hoebe – SRUC, Charlotte Allender – Uni of Warwick, Joanne Russell – JHI, Vickie Cooke – Plant Heritage

The meeting was chaired by Nigel Maxted (NM).

**22/14 Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (NM)**

Not discussed. To be covered at November's meeting.

**22/15 Actions and Matters arising (NM)**

Not discussed. To be covered at November's meeting.

**22/16 Welcome and introduction to NIAB EMR (DS)**

DS gave a brief introduction to East Malling Research institute and its recent merge with The National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB). Research at NIAB EMR is delivered through three programmes: crop physiology, plant pathology and entomology, and genetics and crop improvement, particularly fruit crops. The latter aims to develop industry leading varieties of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, and apples using innovative methods.

This was followed by presentations from NIAB EMR colleagues on several work areas. These included:

- Berry Genetic improvement Network – DS
- Strawberry breeding and genetics – AJ
- Rubus breeding and minor crops – FF
- Breeding Value (EU project) – SL
- Apple genetics research and breeding – AK

**22/17 Update on European funding opportunities (CB)**

There has been a delay to the official association of the UK to Horizon Europe, but UK researchers will have full access to the programme from the start. In the meantime, the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) introduced the financial guarantee in November 2021 aimed at supporting successful UK applicants who are unable to sign Horizon Europe grant agreements for calls running until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. The UK Government is also consulting with the EU

Commission to finalize the UK association. However, it is considering further alternatives, including continued funding for eligible UK researchers to participate in Horizon Europe and other opportunities open to third countries applicants, should they fail to reach an agreement at the end of these consultations.

We are currently unable to feed into the cluster 6 work programme content, but it will likely have at least one topic of interest to this group (crop wild relatives) so CB encouraged the group to participate when more information is published.

**22/18 ECPGR Steering Committee meeting (CL)**

The UK has agreed to continue its financial contributions and participation in the new ECPGR Phase XI which will start in 2024, focusing on the implementation of the PGR Strategy. The role and effectiveness of Working Groups (WGs) was also discussed. It was agreed that they remain useful to ECPGR, but that their structure and mode of operation should be revised. There are ongoing discussions around the Belgium Government's offer to host a central cryo-hub. A new WG on Cryopreservation has been setup with the suggestion of nominating two co-Chairs. ECPGR also agreed to support the National Centre for Plant Genetic Resources of Ukraine to cover staff costs and the safe duplication of the PGR material. A detailed report can be found [here](#).

**22/19 Promoting a Plant Genetic Resource Community for Europe (NM)**

NM is involved in a German-government funded project to develop accessible Crop Wild Relatives in-situ descriptors for EURISCO. Defra and Natural England have also funded the further development of in-situ conservation of CWRs in the UK.

The University of Birmingham, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, University of Nottingham, and the James Hutton Institute are involved in Project Grace, an initiative aimed to create a European PGR infrastructure for safeguarding and easy access to both ex-situ and in-situ conserved PGR. A few UKPGR group members believed the new infrastructure might replace rather than compliment ECPGR.

**22/20 Date of next meeting (NM) – Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. To be held in person at Defra offices in London, but MS Teams will be available for those unable to travel.**