MINUTES OF UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP MEETING 23 MARCH 2005

Present:

Mike Ambrose	John Innes Centre (Chair)	Dave Astley	WHRI
Brian Ford-Lloyd	Birmingham University	Angela Karp	R-Res
Nigel Maxted	Birmingham University	Ken Tobutt	EMR
Niall Green	SASA	Mervyn Humphreys	BBSRC
Bob Sherman	HDRA	Neil Munro	HDRA
Joan Cottrell	Forestry Commission	Sean May	NASC
Simon Linington	Millennium Seed Bank	Martin Lewis	Defra
Michael Camlin	DARDNI	Fernando Latorre	Defra
Emma-Jane Lamont	IC, Wye	Mary Oduro	Defra
Bob Cooke	NIAB	Helen Santis	Defra

05/01 - Apologies for absence

1. Apologies were received from:

Clare Rushowski	BBSRC
Emma Hennessey	Defra
Martyn Ibbotson	Defra
Gavin Ramsey	Scottish Crop Research Trust
Susan Williams	BSPB

05/02 - Minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2004

2. HDRA had been misspelt (now corrected) and the reference to Prunus should be removed from Paragraph 24 (done).

05/03 - Matters arising from previous minutes

3. Mike Ambrose reported that he had now made contact with Frank Bisby, and would report in more detail as soon as possible. Simon Linington said that an update on copyright issues would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

Update: Simon to update members at the next UKPGR Group meeting on 25 October.

05/04 - International Regime on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing

4. Fernando Latorre briefed the UKPGR group about international meetings he had attended with Martyn Ibbotson over the past few months relating to 1) an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Bangkok; 2) the international treaty on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture of the FAO (next agenda item).

5. Fernando reported that prior to the Bangkok meeting in February, a stakeholders meeting was held at Kew where ideas and views on the

negotiations and in particular the two most important and likely proposals for Bangkok were discussed, namely:

1. Disclosure of origin of Genetic Resources as a formal requirement in patent applications; a matter on which the EU had recently agreed a common proposal.

2. A proposal to explore a possible International Certificate of Origin or Source or Legal Provenance.

6. The Bangkok meeting, the Third Meeting of the Working Group on ABS, addressed for the first time the possibility of having an International Certificate of origin for Genetic Resources but there were bound to be difficulties with implementation, practicalities and application. In particular the UK, after the stakeholders meeting at Kew, had concerns about practical implications for stakeholders who conduct biodiversity research for scientific purposes and not for commercial purposes. It would be highly desirable that the certificate differentiates these two. The UKPGR Team agreed.

7. Fernando said that little progress had been made in Bangkok. However, he noted two important outcomes. On certificates the final Recommendation invites organisations in particular to conduct pilot studies on the practicalities of the certificates to be submitted the to the Secretariat of the CBD. The other important outcome, which is a key issue for the whole EU, is that it was agreed that an analysis of current instruments be conducted to identify lessons learned and gaps ("gap analysis"). The final recommendation includes a table, or matrix, laying out the elements of such gap analysis which is to be completed before October.

8. Fernando confirmed that a follow-up stakeholder meeting to discuss Bangkok's outcome had been scheduled for 13 May at the Royal Horticulture Society (RHS), Wisley (this meeting has now being postponed to September/October given the little progress to report; a summary of the outcomes and the official report was sent to Mike Ambrose).

9. Members asked who would take liability under the certificates proposal set out above. Fernando said that the issue of liability had not been tackled as yet, as the certificates proposal is at a very early stage. However, future discussions will have to address and clarify this important issue.

05/05 - International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (IT)

10. Fernando said that since the last update by Martyn Ibbotson following the meetings held in Rome in October/November 2004 there had been no major progress to report. Ongoing preparatory work on the draft standard material transfer agreement of the International Treaty (Standard MTA) was being carried out. The standard MTA will be the subject of the next relevant international meeting that will take place in Tunisia in July.

05/06 - EU GENRES II Programme (EC Regulation 870/2004)

11. Martin Lewis said that the European Commission had made no further progress on a call for proposals since the last meeting.

Update: An EC Management Committee (ManCom) meeting was held on 21 April to discuss arrangements for the call for proposals. This is now expected in July with the selection process taking place in the autumn. Details will be circulated to members when available**.**

05/07- UK National Inventory of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

12. Martin Lewis said that the bid for funding the Inventory Report's internet portal from Defra's Challenge Fund, although well received, had not been successful. Funding remained a priority and alternative streams were now being sought. He would keep members informed about any developments.

13. Further to the advice to Defra from the UKPGR Group which met on 23 January, Martin and Mike would be considering how the Inventory Report's recommendations might be progressed.

14. The inclusion of landraces in the Inventory was a good start but there was still much work to be done. A questionnaire would be circulated to members seeking their views and the results would help define the scope of the further work. Discussion with Defra would then take place on how the work might be progressed, including a timescale and the possibility of Defra funding.

15. It was suggested (under AOB) that a meeting should be held to consider how the work started in the Inventory might be progressed. Mike would consider this further and get back to members.

05/08 - European Co-Operative programme (ECP/GR): AEGIS start up meeting held in November 2004, in Alnarp, Sweden.

16. Ken Tobutt and Dave Astley said the meeting had been very useful and well organised. They had made a number of new contacts with their European counterparts. Some teams were well advanced in their speciality areas whilst others had barely made an impact. For example, they sited the Allium team who had reported a number of recommendations from new areas of research. A follow up meeting was scheduled for the end of May 2005. Members will be notified of date in due course (also see http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/AEGIS/StartUpMeeting/Startup_Report.pdf.)

05/09 - Summer Technical Visit to John Innes Centre, Norwich, on 30 June

17. Mike Ambrose confirmed that this year's summer group visit will be held at the John Innes Centre, Norwich. In general members supported Martyn Ibbotson's proposal for a Technical Visit to Northern Ireland in the summer of 2006 and it was agreed discussion should be held over till the October meeting. A significant factor would be how much such a two day trip would cost participants. Michael Camlin of DARDNI would lead

05/10 - Any Other Business

18. Sicilian Conference/Belgrade Workshop - Nigel Maxted told the members he would be attending the first International Conference on Crop Wild Relative Conservation and Use to be held in Agrigento, Sicily, in September (further details at: http://www.pgrforum.org/poke). Brian Ford-Lloyd reported he would be attending The Second European Workshop on National Plant Genetic Resources Programmes in Belgrade in June (further details at: http://www.minpolj.sr.gov.yu/workshop.info.htm).

19. Raising the profile of Plants Genetic Resources - Members agreed that awareness should be raised amongst the public, policy makers and the scientific community itself about the collections in the UK and the important work that is being done. There is no quick fix for this as a long term strategy will be required. Mike Ambrose undertook to assemble some initial thoughts on how this might be taken forward and will report back, probably at the next meeting in October.

Action: Mike Ambrose

20. Harvesting Diversity - It was suggested that it might be timely to have a follow up conference in 2006 to review progress since the successful Harvesting Diversity Conference held in 2002. Such a meeting would map out a strategy for the future. The feasibility and logistics of this would be considered during this year and conclusions circulated to members.

21. Wild Crops - It was agreed that the Crop Wild Relative forum should meet to discuss and formulate a view on planning and in-situ reserves.

Action: Mike Ambrose

22. Climate Change – There was a discussion about how Plant Genetic Resources can contribute to the climate change/global warming debate. Members were sure that there was an important role for PGR to play, but defining that role was difficult since it first required an overarching understanding of all the issues involved. It was suggested that a forum might be held with organisations such as the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to brief members about climate change. Simon Linington said that Sheffield University were undertaking a study into the 'Effects of Plants and Global Warming' and this might also be helpful. Defra's views on climate change would also feed into this process.

Action: Defra/Mike Ambrose

05/11- Date of Next Meeting

23. The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 25th October 2005 (venue Defra).