MINUTES OF THE UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP MEETING 10 OCTOBER 2000

Present

Mike Ambrose (Chairman)	John Innes Centre
Kerry Ten Kate	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Simon Linington	Royal Batanic Gardens, Kew
Ruaraidh Shackville Hamilton	IGER, Aberystwyth
Simon Cutler	BBSRC
Angela Karp	IACR-LARS
Dave Astley	HRI Wellesbourne
Emma-Jane Lamont	Imperial College at Wye
Karen Russell	HRI East Malling
C J A Samuel	Forestry Commission
Niall Green	SASA Edinburgh
Frank Bisby	University of Reading
Nigel Maxted	University of Birmingham
Sean May	Nottingham Arabidopsis Stock Centre
Mike Camlin	DARD (N. Ireland)

In attendance

Martin Smith	MAFF
Sue Popple	MAFF
Soheila A-H-Mackerness	MAFF
Pauline Haslam	MAFF
Georgia Curry (Minutes)	MAFF

00/14 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Nick Hodgetts	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Linda Brown	DFID
Alan Gray	Institute of Terrestrial Ecology
Fiona Dennis	BGCI
Roger Smith	Royal Botanic Gardens, Wakehurst
Gregory Sage	British Society of Plant Breeders
Louise Dougherty	HDRA

00/15 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2000

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted without revision

00/16 Matters arising from previous minutes

Mr Ambrose reported that Greg Sage would continue to represent BSPB.

Mr Ambrose said that the annual report was ready but, due to printer problems, he had not been able to circulate it earlier.

00/17 Developments on the negotiations of the Revised International Undertaking

Mr Smith reported on the outcome of the two Contact Group meetings (Rome and Teheran) he had attended since the last meeting of the Group. In particular, he explained the background to the proposed compromise on Articles 13 and 14 reached in Teheran. In response to questions, he said that he recognized the need for a pragmatic interpretation of the rules on access which took account of the availability of material and staff resources. He agreed that the term "genetic parts and components" would need defining if the reference was maintained; and acknowledged that there could be problems on taxonomy. Mr Smith sought the reactions of the Group to the proposed compromise on Article 14.2.d(iv). To aid the Group, he undertook to circulate a note on its possible implications. He also asked for advice on how the UK preferred list of genera, to which the Multilateral System would apply, might be prioritized, should it prove difficult to negotiate the full list. Mr Ambrose undertook to collect views from the Group.

Action Mr Smith and Mr Ambrose

00/18 Update on EU Regulation 1467/94

Mr Smith said that the report of the independent review had been favorable. Mr Maxted reported that he had met Mr Fred Steenhoff, the new Commission official responsible for Regulation 1467/94, who had informed him that there would be a call for projects in 12 - 18 months time. It seemed that the Commission intended to concentrate on *in situ* conservation. There may also be further encouragement for more involvement of NGOs. It was unclear if the call would cover training projects, in which Dr Maxted had a keen interest. Mr Astley, who had attended a meeting of stakeholders in Brussels (Dr Burne had represented MAFF), said that it

was clear that the Commission would seek a better balance between animal and plant genetic resources and between *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation than under the previous Regulation. He did not think that the Commission would restrict itself to *in situ* projects only. Mr Smith agreed, and offered to seek clarification from Mr Steenhoff.

Action Mr Smith

00/19 Updated on other EU Plant Genetic Resources projects

Mr Sackville Hamilton reported that five Framework Programme V (FPV) projects involving plant genetic resources had been approved: two of which had been merged to result in a total of four. Two of the projects were being co-ordinated in the UK. Two involve data handling, one of which was being co-ordinated by the UK and the other by EGRIS (European Genetic Resources Information System). The other projects involved molecular characterization and the improvement of re-generation methodologies. Mr Ambrose reported that CGN was co-ordinating the EGRIS project and that the contract had yet to been signed. The aim of this project was to establish a catalogue of genetic resources held in Europe by means of a list of lists. Although the UK was not formally part of the project, Mr Ambrose had approached to project leader and they were in discussion over how the UK would become involved.

00/20 European Co-operative Programme/Plant Genetic Resources

Mr Sackville Hamilton reported that at the last meeting of the ECP/GR forage network, concern had been expressed about the likelihood that the network would not meet again for another five years. The problem was created as a result of the changes agree by the Steering Committee at their last meeting where a stronger emphasis had been placed on the network level rather than individual crop specific working groups. Mr Ambrose stated the changes had been implemented to try to broaden the range of crop species covered and to counter the tendency for crop specific working groups to become self perpetuating. Mr Astley said that the vegetable network would be willing to expand and include other groups. The view from members of the Group involved in the programme was that the new operational structure was not working. Dr Astley remarked that work undertaken under ECP/GR was mostly work 'in kind' and that few people were prepared to undertake such work indicated by others when they themselves had not been directly involved in the meetings.
Mr Smith said that he had little understanding of how the ECP/GR networks operated and what the current problems were. Mr Ambrose said that the UKPGR

Group could prepare background information and working experiences of the programme operation during phase V1. Mr Smith suggested that there might be merit in holding an extra-ordinary meeting of the UK PGR group to consider the problems of the networks prior to the meeting of the ECP/GR Steering Group planned for March 2001.

Action Mr Ambrose, Dr Curry, the UK PGR Group

00/21 EUFORGEN

Mr Samuel reported that this programme had similarities to ECP/GR on which it had been based and the initiative is financed by member countries, based on the UN scale of contributions. From earlier this year the UK had become a fully paid up member. Funding for the second phase had been raised and would support a permanent co-ordinator at IPGRI. There was a steering committee of 30-40 members (one from each country) which met every five years. Networks were based on species, including: conifers (for which commercial aspects were important); the European black poplar (for which EU funding had successfully been obtained); and the Mediterranean cork-oak (which seeks to improve conservation and sustainable use of these species across the Mediterranean Countries to raise the quality of cork). These groups meet at least once a year to develop inventories of species found in participating countries and to study their genetic nature. The information available on native species in the UK was rather poor due to lack of resources. Ms Russell reported on work on inventories of rare hardwood species that were economically valuable. HRI was working on a conservation strategy which would include aspects related to know-how in the use of timber, the fruit etc. HRI was seeking funding through FPV to study the biology of these species and the effect of climatic changes on them.

00/22 PLANTNET spring conference and links to UKPGRG

Mr Ambrose and a number of others from the Group had participated in the spring conference of PLANTNET held in Edinburgh in May. He drew attention to the fact that one of the terms of reference of the Group specifically mentions linking with botanic gardens and was pleased to be able to speak at the meeting of the UKPGR Groups history and current workings. Mr Ambrose reported that PLANTNET had recently succeeded in obtaining charitable status which would open the way for them to seek funding to take the organisation forward. He had initiated the forging of closer links between PLANTNET and the UKPGR Group

through the exchange of minutes between the Groups in the first instance. Reciprocal attendance of meeting was a further option that would be reviewed in the light of how links developed in the future. A series of bilateral initiatives that might be of mutual benefit were raised including activities on understanding the diversity of domestic crops, fund-raising, development of educational packages.

00/23 World Information and Early Warning system on PGRFA: development and updating of entries

Mr Sackville Hamilton reported that IGER had recently updated the information on it held on the WIEWS web site and advised that each institute (including MAFF) should do the same. Mr Astley said he had been trying to do this for many months without success. Recent changes to the web pages and numerous email exchanges had finally resulted in success. The relevant web site was: **http://apps3.fao.org/wiews/institute_query.htm.**
Mr Ambrose he had recently refreshed his memory on a recent progress report on WIEWS (FAO, CGRF A-8/99/6) in order to try to assess the impact of what a centralised system such as WIEW had to offer as opposed to a newtork of links approach. There were components of a centralised approach which were useful such as the international list for institute codes. However, when browsing through other data that was held such as the entries for the UK, it was clear that the data was neither complete or up-to-date in terms of formal sector or private company holdings. A number of collections came down to private collections of individuals which seemed to be a very tenuous basis on which to build such a system. A detailed appraisal of the UK entries was required.

Action Mr Ambrose and Dr Curry

00/24 Pre-breeding Platform

No further action had been made on this initiative.

Action Mr Ambrose and Dr Astley

00/25 Technical Summer Meeting

Mr Linington confirmed that the meeting had been organised at the Wellcome Trust Millennium Building at Wakehurst Place on 7 November and distributed the programme and directions (attached as Annex A). [NOTE: this has now been postponed to the new year following storm damage to the Millenium Seed Bank].

00/26 Any Other Business

Dr Karp informed the Group that following the closure of the Long Ashton Research Station site in 2003, a duplicate willow collection would be established at Rothamstead. Dr Karp currently had funds to initiate molecular studies to perform a characterisation assessment of the collection and address issues of duplication. The current living collection would remain in its current location for as long as it was possible to rent the land.

Dr Green informed the meeting that the Community Plant Varieties Office had issued guidelines on the naming of varieties, including on when a name could be re-used.

Mr Ambrose stated that following issues raised concerning the correct procedures for registering safety duplicates and the separate issue of disaster planning, he proposed to initiate a safety duplicate space audit the group. He was interested in learning who was holding duplicates for others and where there was spare capacity that might be available for safety duplicates so should the need arise there was information to hand.

Mr Ambrose thanked Dr May for enhancing the UKPGR Group web site and sought feedback on it. Prof Bisby mentioned that the current name of the site meant that it did not feature high on search engine lists. Dr May would look at alternative name to raise the impact of the site search.

Mr Ambrose also thanked Dr May for updating the Groups email server address list.

00/27 Date of next meeting

The group would meet on Tuesday 6 March at 12.00 for lunch, followed by the meeting. Accommodation to be confirmed by MAFF.

Action Dr Curry