MINUTES OF THE UK PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES GROUP MEETING 9 OCTOBER 2001

Present

Mr M Ambrose (Chairman)	John Innes Centre
Mr M Smith	DEFRA
Mr N Green	SASA
Dr E-J Lamont	Wye College
Dr N Maxted	Birmingham University
Dr R Sackville-Hamilton	IGER
Dr D Astley	HRI
Kerry Ten Kate	RBG Kew
Dr S Cuttler	BBSRC
Mr B Sherman	HDRA
Mr M Camlin	DARD

In attendance

Mr T Poole	DEFRA
Dr G Curry (Minutes)	DEFRA

00/13 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Dr A Karp	IACR
Dr B Ford-Lloyd	University of Birmingham
Mr S Linington	RBG Wakehurst
Dr C Wall	DEFRA
Dr G Ramsey	SCRI
Dr G Sage	BSPB

01/14 Minutes of the meeting held 6 March 2001

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted. However, on item 01/11 the word September should be added before 2003.

01/15 Matters arising from previous meeting

S Cuttler updated those present on Framework Programme VI. He noted that 'Agriculture' was missing. M Smith suggested getting in touch with Anne Mogg or Sally Treadwell as it is their Branch who are involved with these negotiations.

01/16 Developments on the Revised International Undertaking

M Smith reported on recent meetings. Three main issues proved difficult during the negotiations and were unresolved: (a) the list of genera, which excludes many crops essential for food security, (b) the extent to which IPRs can be taken out on materials obtained under the Multilateral System, bearing in mind that EU and UK legislation provide for patenting industrial use of extracted genes and (c) the savings clause, i.e. the relationship between the IU and other international agreements, in particular TRIPS, (EU and UK agree that they should be mutually supportive but certain countries would prefer an hierarchy between them). B Sherman asked if there was an agreement on MTAs, to which M Smith replied that these would be discussed by the Governing Body.

01/17 European Co-operative Programme Steering Committee Meeting

M Smith, after a steer from members of the UKPGR Group, will introduce a proposal to encourage the Steering Group to create a task force to focus on specific issues regarding the Phase VII. Currently, EC/PGR is dealing with too many issues, therefore resources are spread too thinly. Better value-added work was top priority. He also informed the UKPGR Group that Fred Steenhoff would also be present at the meeting – he is responsible for resurrecting Regulation 1467/94. M Ambrose added that Mr P. Mulvany would represent the NGOs. He had hoped to attend this meeting as well, but previous commitments in the UK made it impossible.

Action M Smith

01/18 UK Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Focal Point

M Smith informed those present that at the last conference of the Parties (COP 5 in Nairobi) it was decided to establish a National Focal Point and Competent Authority(s) to promote Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) of Genetic Resources. In the UK, DEFRA contracted the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBG K) to explore the legal position and locate contact details within the UK before a web page is established by DEFRA. K T Kate explained that the idea behind this work was to facilitate ABS within the UK. To date, 21 Countries have a Focal Point (the UK is not one of them). She hoped that by the next meeting of the CBD on ABS in Bonn (22 – 26 October), there would be a demo web page from the UK. This page will be in three parts: (a) introduction, setting the context and mandate of CBD, (b) a legal summary, setting out UK legislation for access to Genetic Resources (mainly property law) and (c) pages for obvious authorities with genetic resources, both in-situ and ex-situ, e.g. English Nature, Church of England, RBG K, etc. There will be hypertext links between the ABS web page and most of these authorities. After the setting up, it will be DEFRA's responsibility to add new authorities and update existing ones. M Smith pointed out that the object of this page was to put the parties together only and inform on CBD guidelines. Information on IU will also be included.
K T Kate has worked with M Ambrose concerning current UK collections and contact details. K T Kate planned to contact all represented institutions to seek permission to use the information and to allow final revision of the content.

Action on the website Kerry Ten Kate, Martin Smith, Georgia Curry

01/19 European Plant Genetic Resources Information System EPGRIS

R Sackville-Hamilton reported on the EURISCO programme. This is a programme through which Gene Banks send information to a central data base EURISCO will validate information, provided by UK contributors. M Camlin asked who would be responsible for running this programme. M Ambrose responded that this would be IPGRI's responsibility. The programme will be running for as long as it is needed and if there is any savings in money or time, then that will be a benefit. D Astley observed that under this programme it would be easier to obtain information. E.-J. Lamont wanted to know the format to be used when submitting information. D Astley expressed the view that the current standing of the FAO Multi-Crop Passport descriptors was still under revision and only when a finalised version was published could the programme hope to start in ernest. According to R Sackville-Hamilton people can send different fields of information, such as taxonomy, habitat, etc. He informed the Group that there were no deadlines this year. N Maxted pointed out that this would be a good opportunity to standardise available information. R Sackville-Hamilton to keep the Group informed of future developments.

Action R Sackville-Hamilton

01/20 UK Vegetable Seed Reference Collections

The statutory vegetable seed collections at NIAB Cambridge were currently being moved to SASA in Edinburgh. The question of whether seed of old cultivars, which were no longer in commerce, could be made available from the statutory collections to the Gene Banks for general release, was raised by HDRA. This practice had already been implemented in the past when seed was made available to both HRI and JIC with the agreement of the UK Agricultural Departments.

However, when N Green had requested legal advice from DEFRA on the legal ownership of seed in the statutory collections, DEFRA indicated that seed of cultivars obtained for a particular statutory purpose e.g. registration, could not be used for any other purpose despite the fact that this seed had been available in the commercial market. Although seed could be stored/maintained in the Gene Bank by agreement with UK Departments, it could not be released for general use. In other Countries, this material is released once it ceases commercial production and marketing. Further clarification of the legal advice would have to be sought from DEFRA. N Green would continue to monitor this issue and try to secure a practical long-term resolution of the problem.

Action N Green

01/21 Pre-breeding Platform

Mr Ambrose will attend a DEFRA funded workshop on 22 October at the Institute of Biology at which key stakeholders will discuss public research investment in the genetic improvement of crops. The workshop forms part of a commissioned study which will include case studies on a number of selected crop species.

Action M Ambrose

01/22 Technical Summer Meeting

This meeting has been arranged for the 30 October to visit the Wellcome Trust Millennium Building and Wakehurst Place. Those intending to attend should inform the organisers.

01/23 AOB

No items raised.

01/24 Date of next meeting

The Group would meet on Tuesday 5 March at 12.00 for lunch, followed by the meeting. Accommodation to be confirmed by MAFF.

Action G Curry

GEORGIA CURRY