

REPORT ON MEETING OF THE SEED POTATO
WORKING PARTY held at GUESSEY HOUSE,
EDINBURGH, at 10.30 a.m. on FRIDAY,
30th OCTOBER, 1970.

PRESENT: Department of Agriculture: Messrs. Brook, Lyall, Struthers,
Hardie, Barrie, Frayne and Todd;

N.F.U. : Messrs. J. Arbuckle, Young, Galloway, Drummond and
Cunningham;

Highlands and Islands Board: Mr. Gill;

P.M.B. : Mr. Rennie;

Ministry of Agriculture: Mr. Anderson;

S.P.T.A. : Messrs. Fulton, Barr and Hunter.

Mr. Brook was in the Chair.

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr. W. Gray.

LABELLING SCHEME. Mr. Lyall, for the Department, stated that the Department had drawn the line at 50 acres or 300 tons per annum when deciding which larger users were entitled to three monthly billing for labels supplied. This opened the entitlement to 250 users of which 140 had applied and been accepted.

Mr. Lyall explained that the Department had agreed to extend the validity of labels from three weeks to two months for labels issued to larger Merchant Growers (200 acres or more).

Mr. Lyall stated that to date the Department had inspected 40% of seed in relation to labels issued (16,000 tons issued and 4,500 tons inspected). Only 100 tons or less had been rejected.

Mr. J. Arbuckle complained regarding the size and quality of the labels:- absorbent, prone to tearing printing running, washers peeling off. Mr. Lyall stated that the size of the label was in accordance with the E.E.C. Regulations. With regard to quality of labels he confirmed that this was being investigated. Mr. Arbuckle also requested that extra labels be issued to allow for labels being damaged or lost. Mr. Lyall agreed to investigate the possibility of issuing additional labels to cover possible losses.

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It was agreed that it would be unduly complicated for the Department to make provision for identifying double grading on official labels. Mr. Lyall stated that if a Merchant wished to obtain labels from an area office other than that pertaining to the area where the potatoes were being grown this should be arranged direct with the Senior Inspectors of the areas concerned. If satisfactory arrangements could not be made with the Senior Inspectors it could then be taken up with the Department through S.P.T.A.

Mr. Lyall stated that it would not be necessary for labels, either official or otherwise, to be attached to Thirds during the current loading season.

DISEASE STATISTICS. A paper was issued. The Department expressed concern regarding the build up of groundkeepers. They felt that this was a result of more use of mechanical harvesters and pre-emergence sprays. The Department agreed to bring to the attention of Farmers the need to eliminate groundkeepers as much as possible. Mr. Young observed that leafroll and severe mosaic were now almost eliminated from Scotland.

EELWORM. In 1969/70 the following results were issued for compulsory pre-cropping soil sampling:-

Acres soil tested - 87,447 acres

Acres failed - 7,024 acres

Percentage failed - 8.0%

The Department pointed out that they were still soil testing 50% in excess of plantings.

Concern was expressed on behalf of the Department of Agriculture with regard to the effect which the E.E.C. Regulations would have on Scotland and England in the event of the United Kingdom entering the Common Market.

The Department stated that to date 2,453 applications for Soil Sampling had been received as against 2,058 at the same time in 1969. It was anticipated/

anticipated that a total of 3,500 to 4,000 applications would be received. Accordingly the penalty being applied as from 1st November appeared to have increased the applications to date by 25%. It was agreed that Merchants renting land would be allowed to make application for Soil Testing up to the end of November without the penalty being imposed. It was emphasised that this was a concession for 1970 only and a similar concession would not be made available in future years.

Mr. Todd stated that non-viable eelworm cysts were found in 27% of samples which passed the pre-crop eelworm test. Experience indicated to the Department that when non-viable cysts were present live cysts were not far away. The Department stated that it was proposed in 1972 to count non-viable cysts. In the event of only non-viable cysts being located the Grower would be offered a re-test. If he refused the re-test his field would be turned down. On the re-test only live cysts would be counted. After considerable discussion it was agreed to allow this amendment to the Scheme.

The Department stated that eelworm tests could be banked for one year. It was observed that for 'H' Grade in England no pre-crop soil test was required. Mr. Fulton suggested that this was against the national interest for the reason that this allowed eelworm to be spread into eelworm free areas. It was suggested that this matter should be discussed further by the Potato Trades Consortium.

The Department announced that the area of sample for eelworm pre-crop tests would be reduced from 15 to 10 acres for the 1972 crop.

VENEAL NECROSIS. Mr. Todd, for the Department, stated that in recent years Veneal Necrosis was causing the Department added concern. Up to 1967 there was a 0.25% rejection for Veneal Necrosis. In 1968 it was 1%, 1969 1% to 2%, and 1970 in excess of 2%. Mr. Todd added that these statistics were not as bad as they looked. However, it was very bad publicity for Scotch Seed. Three-quarters of the total of Veneal Necrosis was in Record grown in the southern half of Scotland. In 1970 the/

the Department had intended carrying out a fairly close survey of Veneal Necrosis but because of negotiations taking place with South Africa the idea was postponed. The Department now wished to carry out a survey in 1971. The survey would not in any way affect the granting of a Certificate in respect of a crop. The Department suggested that the nil tolerance for Veneal Necrosis should be continued for 1971 and that the Working Party should consider the matter again when the results of the survey were available. If their worst suspicions were found to be established and that Veneal Necrosis was really wide spread and out of control they may require to introduce a tolerance for 'A' Grade. Mr. Young suggested that the biggest source of infection for Veneal Necrosis was in Ware Crops of Record grown in seed growing areas. Mr. Galloway suggested that there should be a prohibition against Uncertified Seed being planted in seed growing areas. Mr. Todd stated that in the experience of the Department most stocks of Commercial Ware were not far removed from Certified Seed. Mr. Lyall stated that to ban the planting of Uncertified Seed would be very difficult to police and he doubted if there was any legislation in existence which would permit it. Mr. Brook stated that in view of possible international implications it would be most undesirable for new legislation to be placed before the House of Commons.

Mr. Todd stated that East Craigs were working on a quick diagnosis for Veneal Necrosis. This, however, would not be available for 1971. In a reply Mr. Todd stated that at present the tests should be completed at East Craigs within 10 to 12 days. The Department agreed to look into means of speeding up the notification of the results of Veneal Necrosis laboratory tests.

Mr. Barr enquired regarding the point of infection with Veneal Necrosis of F.S. Seed. The Department agreed to carry out an exercise to endeavour to ascertain the cause of infection.

PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION. Mr. Lyall stated that a Department team comprising himself and Messrs. Hardie, Struthers and Graham were to visit./

visit in conjunction with the local N.F.U., the main seed growing areas in Scotland with a view to publicising the new stem cutting material and in an effort to educate Growers in the proper handling of it. He added that publicity material would be issued to all Seed Growers before the visits commenced. The Department were also proposing to exhibit at the Smithfield Show this year and at some of the main English County Shows next year. Mr. Barr advised the Department to guard against publicising the stem cutting material before it was available from Scotland in commercial quantities. It was considered that commercial supplies would be available for England in 1972. The first year material would be retained in Scotland unless there is no market for it in Scotland. Mr. Lyall stated that the Auctioneers had agreed to state in their catalogues that first year stem cutting material is only to be purchased for planting in Scotland. He added that the Department would have more control on first year material in future years. Mr. Gill stated there was a need for test growing of the stem cutting material in England to let the Growers know how to handle it properly. Doctor Wardie stated that N.A.A.S. could be given seed to test grow. This would, however, be no better than a demonstration. The best publicity would be the commercial growing of the stem cutting material in England from 1972 onwards.

BAG TRIALS. Mr. Lyall explained the tests which the Department were proposing to carry out with regard to paper and polypropylene containers during the current loading season.

FARM CODE NUMBER. The Department indicated that they were not prepared to issue a Grower/Dealer with a Code Number to cover all his crops. They in fact indicated that the practice of granting a single Code Number for amalgamated farms may be discontinued.

REGISTER OF CERTIFIED CROPS. Mr. Lyall stated that the anticipated date of publication was 5th November, 1970. The Department hoped to have the preparation of the Register computerised in a few years time which may allow for earlier publication.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING./

DATE OF NEXT MEETING. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Seed Potato Working Party would be around April, 1971.

The Chairman explained that Mr. Gordon Lyall was likely to be leaving the Seed Potato Section of the Department of Agriculture to take up an appointment with the Highlands & Islands Development Board and that in this event Mr. Barrie would be taking over his position in the Seed Potato Section. The members of the Seed Potato Working Party conveyed their best wishes to Mr. Lyall in the event of his taking up the new appointment.