

REPORT on MEETING between THE SCOTTISH
POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION and the
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE at Chesser
House, EDINBURGH, at 3.30 p.m. on
WEDNESDAY, 10th MARCH, 1971.

PRESENT: Department: Messrs. Brook and Lyall;

S.P.T.A. : Messrs. I.P. Fulton, A.D. Williamson, J. Fordyce
and R.D. Hunter.

COMMON MARKET. Mr. Brook informed the meeting that he and Gordon Lyall had recently attended an E.E.C. Conference in Brussels concerning Seed Potato Regulations within the Common Market. Mr. Lyall stated that for the time being it had to be assumed that the United Kingdom would enter the Common Market. In fact he thought that in balance the odds were slightly against the United Kingdom's entry into the Market. A clear indication of whether or not we would enter the Common Market should be available by June or July, 1971. If we enter the Common Market we would go in in 1973.

Plant Health Barriers. It is the intention of the Department to maintain the Plant Health Barrier around the United Kingdom as long as possible after our entry into the Common Market. With a view to achieving this they had deliberately not enquired too deeply into the interpretation of existing E.E.C. Regulations. They preferred to leave any arguments until after entry into the Common Market. By this means they hoped that it should be possible to allow Plant Health Barriers remain in existence until these arguments had been settled in say 1975.

Compulsory Sealing and Ban on Sale of Uncertified Seed. Mr. Lyall reported that there would be two years grace allowed after entry into the Common Market. He hoped that it may be possible to adapt the existing Labelling Scheme rather than to introduce Compulsory Sealing. Mr. Lyall stated that the ban on Uncertified sales cannot be enforced but that the ban would tend to reduce "open" sales of Uncertified Seed.

Plant Health Directive. Mr. Lyall reported that there was a Plant Health Directive in draft. He added that it had been in draft for approximately 4 years. However, it may be finalised before the date of the U.K.'s entry into the Common Market. The provisions in the draft allowed for
Free/

free trade in agricultural produce, including potatoes, throughout the Common Market countries. The regulations provide for a strict check on commodities being brought into the community from non-member nations. It is possible that if the Plant Health Directives are introduced this may accelerate the removal of a Plant Health ban around the United Kingdom.

Eelworm Directive. The existing Directive prohibits the growing of potatoes on land known to be infected with eelworm. However, only a crop being planted for seed requires to have a pre-crop soil test for eelworm. The Department stated that in the United Kingdom only recordings of the presence of eelworm after our entry into the Common Market would be recognised. Eelworm tests carried out previous to entry into the Common Market would still be referred to in connection with our own internal Certification Scheme but would not be used in connection with the E.E.C. Regulations.

Wart Disease Directive. Mr. Lyall stated that this Directive need not cause much concern in the United Kingdom. The Directive provides that no potatoes are to be grown Scheduled for wart disease and only immune varieties are to be grown in a safety area surrounding Scheduled Areas. So far as the U.K. was concerned the safety area would be the remainder of the farm. It was the Department's intention to carry out tests this Summer with a view to reducing Scheduled land to approximately 6,500 acres., in Scotland. At present many whole farms are Scheduled as a result of isolated occurrences of wart disease in particular fields. It would be the Department's intention in the future to schedule only these particular fields.

IMPORT REGULATIONS. There was a short discussion regarding the proposed alterations to the Import Regulations affecting inter alia potatoes. Mr. Lyall pointed out that the Regulations which were being altered related to plant health and that there were no valid grounds for objecting to the alterations. In any case, he added, that in the main there was nothing in the alterations which need worry Scottish Potato Growers with the possible exception of the lifting of the prohibition against the importation of new potatoes from Finistere.

LABELLING SCHEME. /

LABELLING SCHEME. There was a brief discussion regarding the Labelling Scheme. Mr. Lyall stated that the only real worry which the Department had regarding the operation of the first year of the Scheme was the considerable over-ordering of labels by Potato Merchants. It was agreed to discuss this matter further at the end of the loading season. A vote of thanks to the Chairman terminated the meeting.