

REPORT on MEETING OF SPTA/NASPM
JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE with the
DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE and FISHERIES
FOR SCOTLAND held at Chesser House,
EDINBURGH at 2.15p.m. on WEDNESDAY,
17th OCTOBER, 1979.

PRESENT:

SPTA - Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Henderson, D.H. Lindsay and T. McClung, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

NASPM - Messrs. H.N. Aves, C.J. Baker, E.R. Sherriff and D.H. Smith.

DAFS - Messrs. W.M. Bremner, A. Edwards, Dr. D. Hall and Mr. D.C. Todd, with Mrs. C. Allan and Mrs. M. Cuthbert in attendance.

Mr. D.C. Todd occupied the Chair and welcomed the Committee Members. He introduced Mr. Bremner (who is assisting in the drafting of new legislation to implement the new Plant Health Frontier Control) and Mr. Edwards, (who had succeeded Mr. Ian McKenzie on his retiral as head of the Potato Inspection Service) also explained that Dr. Hall now headed the Potato Section at East Craigs in succession to the late Dr. James Hardie.

Mr. Todd also explained that in addition he had received letters from NASPM enclosing a copy of draft revised Conditions of Sale and from Mr. Baker regarding diseases in crops and burning off, which matters could be dealt with in the Agenda for today's meeting.

DAFS
INSPECTORS
VISITS:

Mr. Todd expressed his Department's appreciation of the facility to visit English crops growing from Scotch Seed. For NASPM Mr. Baker felt that only good could come from such visits and that the Report on the 1979 visits was the most comprehensive to date, particularly since it included some comparison with crops growing from seed from other sources. Mr. Todd gave a broad view of the Report and commented that comparison with sister crops in Scotland often raised difficulties. Mr. Edwards view was that apart from two bad instances of blackleg he was reasonably pleased with the results.

Giving his statistical analysis of the Report results Mr. Baker felt these were significant. Mr. Edwards' view was that Scottish certification results do not support the analysis, Dr. Hall adding that the analysis was not statistically representative. He pointed out that Estima and Sceptre were susceptible to blackleg which disease had been widespread throughout Europe in 1979, yet the Scottish Crops had achieved their highest inspection pass rate ever recorded. He also reported that at the 1979 EEC Trials inspections the Dutch (who do not count blackleg) were astonished by the low levels of this disease in samples grown from Scotch Seed and he tabled a graph of the incidence of Blackleg in Scottish Inspections results over many years which showed that the increase reported in 1979 was statistically minimal.

Mr. Smith felt that though much improved since the 1966 peak, 10% is still a considerable problem. He urged mobilisation of effort from all sources, both at home and abroad, to eradicate this problem. Mr. Todd, stated that a lot of internal effort was being made but agreed there was room for improvement in advisory/publicity aspects. The question of identification of the latent form and spread had been referred to the European Potato Pests Organisation and it was felt that Scottish advisory pressures are bearing fruit. Mr. Baker felt that Mechanical or spray control of weeds had as much effect as the introduction of the stem cutting system. Mr. Barr placed emphasis on prevention but stressed that this must depend on identification of causes. Mr. Baker suggested monitoring the relationship between lifting conditions and the daughter crop results, which Mr. Todd pointed out would take time to set up. Mr. Sherriff felt more effort must somewhere be directed towards obtaining/

obtaining answers on which to base advice because Scotch Seed compares badly with Dutch. Mr. Todd repeated DAFS was already applying pressure and hoped this would be matched by ADAS. In reply to Mr. Baker, Dr. Hall stated that no information was available on possible geographic relationship. Mr. Todd concluded by stating that the points had been taken but that there could be no quick solution of the problem, Mr. Smith, noting it was agreed to increase pressure within the U.K. in addition to international pressure.

In reply to Mr. Todd, Mr. Sherriff stated that NASPM Secretariat would communicate with DAFS regarding arrangements for 1980 visits which hopefully could take place during the week before the Scottish training programme. Mr. Baker agreed with Dr. Hall and Mr. Edwards' requests to participate in 1980, adding that NASPM will look into possible changed transport arrangements. Mr. Lindsay enquired whether more twin crop inspections could be arranged which Mr. Smith pointed out would require prior notice.

NEW GRADES
PROPOSALS:

Mr. Todd briefly explained the Department's views on the possible renaming of Scotch Basic Grades and the suggested "Q" (quality) Grade with possible limitation of time scales for multiplication. NASPM representatives felt the fewer changes made the better and pointed out that although FS1 is one year from VTSC Grade, A1 is not one year from FS grade. In reply to Mr. Sherriff, Mr. Todd stated that while inter High Grade Seed Area exchanges could be entered into the Scottish Inspection Scheme he thought it unlikely that Dutch A, B and C grades of seed will be permitted entry into the U.K. Certification Schemes.

CONDITIONS
OF SALE:

Mr. Todd confirmed receipt of a copy of the proposed revised Conditions of Sale too recently for detailed comment which, if thought necessary, would follow at a later date. Mr. Baker explained that the Conditions depended on crop health being all that it ought to be and certainty that labels do relate to the potatoes to which they are attached. He questioned the "crop tonnage/labels issued" relationship and pointed out the Department took no action when infringements are shown to have occurred.

Accepting that infringements can occur, Mr. Todd assured the meeting such cases are marginal and often impossible to prove at law. Suspension has been applied in repeated suspect cases but the new Regulations made this remedy much more difficult to apply. He also felt that more rigid inspection on arrival will help in policing efforts. In an aside he explained the desirability of the Scottish Scheme terminology moving away from "certified", "certification" and "grades" towards "classified", "classification" and "classes".

PLANT
HEALTH
FRONTIER
CONTROLS:

Mr. Baker explained since placing this item on the Agenda NASPM had met with Mr. Chick (MAFF). While they had nothing to add today, they would be pleased to hear the Department's views. In a brief reply Mr. Todd stated it was important not to think that all former U.K. safeguards will cease on 1st January, 1980. His view is that we must trust our E.E.C. partners. There will be no change in respect of supplies from third countries and overall, very little material difference will occur.

ANY OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) Tuberisation of "King Edward" - Mr. Baker explained he had had correspondence with Dr. Hall regarding the gradual annual decline in the weight of the ware content per acre of this variety compared with "Desiree". Dr. Hall explained this has occurred since the paracrinkle - free variation had been introduced (originating from Rothampstead). In discussion it was felt this could be offset by increased planting of "piper" but Mr. Smith explained the Eastern Counties soil was not too favourable for this variety.

(b) "Clean" areas - Mr. Sherriff explained NASPM's view that restriction on planting of uncertified seed in Scotland must come, probably requiring/

requiring statutory power. However small, a start should be made now. Mr. Todd felt a voluntary scheme might come but, unless proved to be the only way to overcome the problem, a compulsory scheme could not be introduced. Discussion covered a recent initiative in the Black Isle (which met some grower opposition) and means of minimising the reservoir of disease to prevent recurrence of the recent "explosion". In reply to Mr. Baker, Mr. Todd thought that approximately 25% of all potato crops in Perth and Angus were not entered into the Inspection Scheme, although it did not follow they were all planted with uncertified seed.

(c) "Burning-off" - The N.A.S.P.M. delegates pressed unanimously and vigorously for introduction of recommended burning off dates in Scotland, the dates themselves being less important than the psychological propaganda effect such recommendation would have on English buyers of Scotch seed. Mr. Todd pointed out that in the face of record inspection pass levels for the Scottish 1979 crop, burning off is not relevant to plant health. Mr. Edwards explained recommendations that cannot be supervised or enforced would not be of use and denied that nothing was being done. Dr. Hall adding that success to date was largely attributable to carefully regulated, high pressure advice issued by the Colleges. Mr. Barr expressed concern that concentration on health aspects should not obscure the economic effects of early burning off (seed prices etc.). Mr. Sherriff stated the point had once again been made but not taken, warning that the situation must be carefully watched.

(d) On farm inspections - Mr. Baker sought the Department's comment on a recent "Farmers Weekly" report that only 40% of Scotch seed is inspected on farm (compared with 100% in England) and that the Scottish Seed Potato Association is to take the matter up with the Department. Mr. Todd explained the Department's target of 50% and its policy of setting and supporting standards rather than criticising them are reasonable, Mr. Edwards adding the Department is trying to improve the "spread" by taking in more of the smaller producers.

Mr. Sherriff expressed appreciation of the opportunity to discuss problems and moved a vote of thanks to the Chair. Mr. Todd replied that, though the Department may not act on the points made, they certainly paid attention to them.

The meeting thereupon concluded.