

REPORT on a MEETING of the
JOINT (NASPM/SPTA) LIAISON
COMMITTEE held at 8 Manor
Place, EDINBURGH at 10.30 a.m.
on Wednesday, 14th OCTOBER, 1981

PRESENT: NASPM - Messrs. H.N. Aves, C.J. Baker, G. Burdhouse and R.G. Ramsay
(Vice G. Costa)

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

Mr. D. Hendry Lindsay (President, SPTA) took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were tendered on behalf of Messrs. R.J. Beeson and E.F. Sherriff (NASPM) and Messrs. A.J. Allan and J.Henderson (SPTA). The Chairman extended the best wishes of those present to Mr. Sherriff for his speedy recovery from his indisposition.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF REGULATIONS: Following the Chairman's introduction Mr. McArthur briefly outlined the history from the time that amendments to the Seed Potatoes Regulations 1978 had first been considered in 1979 down to the present time.

(a) Field Inspections and Grades - Revision of grades now indicated VTSC1 and 2, FS1, 2 and 3, with two subsequent grades (instead of FS4, AAl and AA), the first of which (with tolerances mid-way between FS4 and AAl and originally proposed as "Super A" grade) would become "Super Elite" and the second (to replace AA and originally proposed as simply "A" grade) would become "Elite". Mr. Hunter explained that this stage of the proposals had been agreed by all Scottish producer and merchant organisations with the Scottish Department of Agriculture in March, 1981.

In reply to Mr. Burdhouse in the following discussion, Mr. McArthur explained that "Super Elite", which would be technically equivalent to present FS3 grade (and therefore at least 2 years younger stock than the present AAl grade) would not be limited to one year only at the outset and a tolerance provided for Tobacco Veinal Necrosis in the lowest grade only which grade could not be planted in Scotland.

Mr. Aves explained this accorded closely with the Northern Ireland Scheme and (from 1/9/81) it was now required that all "bought in" seed planted there must Basic grade seed. This was effected by use of Movement Certificates. In reply to Mr. Barr, he confirmed this requirement also applied to Ware growing. No grade name changes had occurred and the Northern Ireland Department viewed an 8-year chain as optimum.

Explaining NASPM's views (pre-circulated in his Paper) Mr. Baker pointed out that English growers take Scotch AAl grade to be only one year older than FS4. Mr. Burdhouse agreed it was difficult to explain to them the difference between Dutch A (certified) Grade and Scotch AAl (Basic) grade, especially when Press comment equated the two grades. NASPM also felt DAFS/MAFF decisions were made irrespective of the Industry's views. In July, 1981 NASPM had pressed MAFF to have uniform Regulations for the whole U.K. (including Northern Ireland, which is presently separate).

In further discussion NASPM's view was that "Super" would be a more appropriate re-name for FS grades (to equate with Dutch SE), for which reason they were opposed to "Super Elite" for AAl (preferring "Super A"). There was agreement that equating with Dutch grades would be helpful for overseas sales in which context "downlabelling", already practice in Northern Ireland (with their Department's full knowledge) and in Holland, should also be allowed in Scotland. NFU pressure for year/

year-numbering of "Elite" grades was not supported by NASPM or SPTA and the Chairman pointed out DAFS was having second thoughts on "Super Elite" nomenclature, which grade it intended should become a 1-year only crop as soon as practicable.

In conclusion the Committee approved either that "Super Elite" should not be used below FS grades or the latter should be abandoned in favour of SE. Use of un-numbered "Elite" below (retained) FS and an AA ("catch") grade (starred in the Crop Register for VN) was also generally approved, although, as Mr. Hunter pointed out, the SPTA's position was restricted by prior agreement with other Scottish organisations.

(b) Tuber Inspections - As pointed out in Mr. Baker's Paper, new Seed Potato Regulations introduced in Northern Ireland from 1st September, 1981 have pre-empted hopes of whole-U.K. uniformity. In respect of size faults, Northern Ireland stipulates 1½% for undersize and 1½% for oversize but NASPM/NFU favour 3% overall instead. SPTA preferred this latter alternative. Mr. Aves pointed out that while Northern Ireland Regulations specified 1½% each, their imports into mainland U.K. will be subject to whatever is adopted here.

It was noted that Northern Ireland allows 1% for soil plus ½% for damage/mis-shapen. Mr. Aves explained 1% soil took account of Eelworm considerations but while Mr. McArthur felt this was still too high he expected PCN problems would feature in the Committee's afternoon discussions with DAFS.

Mr. Barr expressed objection to adopting Northern Ireland's Nil tolerance for frost damage and Mr. McArthur explained the alternative proposal that frost damage be moved into the soft rots category where a 1% overall tolerance applied. Mr. Aves explained the Nil tolerance would apply only to complaints within Northern Ireland and that EEC inspections accept that standards before and after transportation cannot be the same. Summarising the subsequent discussion the Chairman explained that SPTA would first require to consult with the other Scottish organisations.

Mr. Baker pointed out that in his Paper's proposed reduction of the overall Group tolerance to 5% this was more crucial than the individual constituent tolerances within it and in the following discussion it was stated that the English NFU was very concerned with the present seed Regulations permitted tolerances totalling 14% overall, compared with 5% overall tolerances for ware potatoes.

In respect of Common Scab, SPTA was not happy to change. It felt this was a seasonal, non-transmissible problem of appearance not a disease and that the surface area affected was less important than the number of viable eyes remaining. Re-introduction of "scab affected" labels was unlikely to be acceptable by DAFS or the Trade. In deference to these views it was agreed this matter should be left alone. Powdery Scab, however, was regarded as a serious problem of which DAFS was fully aware and news of some decision or action (which could not occur until DAFS and MAFF had reached agreement on what Powdery Scab is) was regarded as possible during the Committee's discussions with DAFS this afternoon.

N.S.D.O.:

Mr. Barr pointed out that the letter calling the meeting to be held tomorrow, following N.S.D.O.'s earlier consultations with the Industry on Seed Potato Exports, contained no hint of any proposals. His own brief (to attend to listen and to report back) led him to seek the Committee's views.

Mr. Ramsay expected the Meeting would be informed of N.S.D.O.'s "sales of rights" plans and Mr. Aves stated the Northern Ireland Department was very concerned about what is coming tomorrow and expected trouble. His information was that 5-year rights exclusivity within Great Britain had already been promised. It was agreed that Messrs. Aves/

Aves, Barr and Ramsay would report back to the Committee's next meeting in London in December.

INCREASED
USE OF
CHEMICALS:

Mr. Barr explained his extreme concern at the much-increased use of chemical treatments, having a chloropropam constituent but which are marketed under numerous proprietary brand names, on all sorts of crops (other than grass, grain and potatoes) in England. In view of the potential dangers this raised for the seed potato trade he sought NASPM help to enlist the aid of ADAS and the NFU to control and to institute an awareness/educational programme.

NASPM stated both ADAS and NFU were aware and worried in respect of possible soil persistence, spray drift damage and so on. They felt MAFF should also be approached (but not the chemical manufacturers direct in the first instance) and the PMB through the Seed Advisory Committee and they agreed to take the matter up immediately

BRITISH
RAIL:

The Chairman read a letter from a NASPM member reporting difficulty following discontinuation of publication of Rail Freight Rates Schedules for potato traffic from Scotland to England.

Mr. Lindsay also explained he had been invited to attend a recent British Rail function in Glasgow at which he had pointed out that 25 years ago British Rail had carried virtually 100% of the seed potato traffic from Scotland to England, but this had fallen to 50% six years ago and only 10% last year. In reply Mr. Roy Harries (Freight Manager, Scotland) had stated that British Rail was not seeking more than 10% of the 1981/82 traffic. Mr. Lindsay contrasted this with Freightliners' current completely opposite ambitions and left the Committee to draw its own conclusions. Mr. Barr's view was that while the trade was currently moving a very large tonnage by road as a result of cheap (recessionary) road freight rates, this could not last and a day of reckoning is inevitable.

CONDITIONS
OF PURCHASE:

Mr. Hunter reported that SPTA was in the final stages of a revision of its Conditions of Purchase and he will arrange to forward a copy to NASPM for information as soon as Council had approved it.

The Meeting then closed with a vote of thanks to the Chair.