

REPORT on a MEETING of the
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL
in Chesser House, EDINBURGH at
10 a.m. on Friday, 30th OCTOBER, 1981

PRESENT: D.A.F.S. Messrs. L.V. McEwan, D.C. Todd and A. Edwards, with E. Barsczek, Miss J. Dickie and Mrs. J. Gardiner in attendance.

- Scientific Services - Drs. D. Hall, A. Howell and J. Todd with Messrs. T. Mabbot, C. Quinn and M. Richardson

N.F.U.S. Messrs. J. Hay and J. McLaren with P. Tait in attendance.

P.M.B. Mr. J. McFarlane

R.H.A.S. Mr. A.H. Campbell

S.A.O.S. Mr. J. Arbuckle

Scottish Agricultural Colleges - Mr. J. Anderson

S.P.T.A. Messrs. D.H. Lindsay and J.R. McArthur with D. Blackmore in attendance

S.S.P.A. Messrs. A. Arbuckle and R. Smith

V.T.S.C.G.A. Mr. J. Forbes

Mr. L.V. McEwan occupied the Chair. He welcomed those present and called for discussion of D.A.F.S. pre-circulated Paper.

CHANGES IN REGULATIONS Mr. Todd referred first to Head A - Points Agreed. In respect of I(c) and II(c) (burning down) Mr. J. Arbuckle enquired re implementation and whether feasible for 1982 FS crops. Mr. Edwards stated no difficulties re 1981 VTSC crops. No third inspections had been carried out but this requirement remains in reserve. More time to consider incoming reports was required before 1982 arrangements could be decided. Mr. McLaren pointed out that 1981 burning down of VTSC (4% of total crop) augured extreme problems if applied to FS (60% of total crop) in 1982. Supported by the industry he suggested it be applied to early varieties FS crops only in 1982. As an alternative, Mr. Todd suggested a phased introduction to FS1 only in 1982, FS1 and FS2 in 1983 and all three FS grades in 1984. The industry had considered this if applied to other maincrop varieties. Mr. Edwards felt this would be administratively more difficult and reminded that the aim is to reduce Blackleg. Dr. J. Todd supported the suggestions as helping to show maturity and Mr. Hay pointed out it would also help in assessing the success (or otherwise) of the arrangements. D.A.F.S. agreed to reconsider in the light of incoming reports, inspections resources, policing difficulties, etc. Mr. Forbes sought the addition of "may be planted" to I(d) and Mr. Lindsay asked if I(e) "chemical treatment" was now on a "should be" basis (not "must be" as at April '81 meeting). Mr. Todd viewed this from a husbandry/signed undertaking approach.

Remaining points in Head A - I, II and III being agreed, discussion turned to Head B - I VTSC Tuber Surface Tolerances. Mr. Todd explained no tolerance for surface skinspot would be allowed and all other VTSC tolerances would remain unchanged. There was discussion on "removal of labels" (B II) (following return of Scottish exports to an English port two years ago) but no firm decision was reached. In respect of revised nomenclature (B III) Mr. Todd stated it had now been proposed the revised AAI Grade be called "Elite", AA (non-eligible) grade remaining unchanged. In support, Mr. Edwards pointed out that adoption of "Elite" would help in exporting. Mr. Hay voiced the industry's preference for "Super A" and was supported by Mr. McFarlane. In reply to Mr. A. Arbuckle, Mr. Todd stated/

stated that initially the grade would continue for as long as its standards could be maintained (Mr. McArthur pointing out it will be the equivalent of present FS3 grade), but it was intended to become a "one-year-only" grade eventually to which end, through time, acreage considerations will help.

After discussion of proposed changes in disease groupings (B IV) the Panel agreed unanimously to accept D.A.F.S.' reasoning for making no changes in respect of Common Scab, Powdery Scab and Rhizoctonia. On this decision BV became inapplicable but Mr. Todd asked for views on the merit of reducing VTSC tolerances for these diseases anyway. The Panel supported Mr. McArthur's view that chemical treatment should effectively reduce rhizoctonia and any tolerance change should await that outcome. There was brief (but indecisive) discussion of undersize/oversize tolerances. Reduction of the tolerance for soil and extraneous matter from 2% to 1% was firmly agreed and Mr. McArthur's view that it should be even tighter for exported seed was fully supported.

Under Head B VI - Powdery Scab, discussion centred on the cankerous form and whether it should be dealt with by area (as a disease) or categorised as mis-shapen. Mr. Edwards explained the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate had not agreed and in 1982 will continue to regard affected tubers as mis-shapen. He proposed Scottish inspectors should continue to deal with it by area (as a disease) but, when found, to warn the grower of the potential problems in the South. It was noted that while A.D.A.S. instructions which triggered the problem had been withdrawn and are to be revised, the damage had been done and Mr. Hay called for pressure to make A.D.A.S. administer the (joint DAFS/MAFF) Statutory Regulations uniformly. Mr. Todd felt that either the surface area must be altered or mis-shapen must be altered to exclude faults due to disease. Mr. Edwards felt it to be essential to remove common powdery scab out of the mis-shapen category altogether and to include it in the disease category. This would require change in Group 5, an increase in the tolerance from 3% to 4% and removal of any surface area criteria. After discussion the Panel agreed to D.A.F.S.' proposed amendment of Regulation 16(6) subject to more precise and specific definition.

POTATO
CYST
NEMATODE:

Introducing the second item on the Agenda, the Chairman felt it would simplify matters if the proposed 4-hectare minimum for soil test was dealt with first. Mr. McArthur stated the industry was not happy with this proposal and wished to retain the 2-hectare minimum subject to other proposals to follow. In support, Mr. Hay stated that a 4 hectare minimum would be unfair to small growers and incompatible with a 0.2 hectare minimum for inspection. He stressed this was not a negative approach - the industry recognised the problem and had the same end in view but insisted that any proposals must be both practical and positive. Mr. Todd made clear that any proposals were not regulative but were to be guidelines for field sampling and administrative staff.

Mr. Hay detailed the industry's proposals as follows:-

1. All applications for soil test of part-fields or fields over 4 hectares to be accompanied by a simple sketch showing the intended direction of drilling.
2. Any exclusion across the intended direction of drilling must be fenced.
3. Exclusions parallel to the intended direction of drilling:-
 - (a) One - no fencing required, irrespective of area to be excluded
 - (b) Two - (i) each over 2 hectares - no fencing required
(ii) either under 2 hectares - must be fenced
4. Fencing - must be adequate to prevent vehicular crossing
 - must be in place at planting time
 - must remain in place until after harvest has been completed.

Mr. Mabbot/

Mr. Mabbot gave a short historical survey of the soil test Scheme and a comparison of various means adopted to several ends. He explained that current sampling levels tested only one twenty-millionth part of the soil in a field. Fencing provides the option to exclude small areas on a permanent basis. Exclusions operate at the lower end of the test scheme, post-crop tests at the upper end. Mr. Todd pointed out that post-crop testing must invoke withdrawal of classification and other dependant difficulties. The S.S.P.A. voiced concern about the proposals' effect on the area available for seed production. Mr. Mabbot stressed the confidentiality of the soil test maps that have been built up over a number of years and Mr. Todd explained the procedure applied when each Soil test application is received. Concern was expressed that confidentiality could prevent a Merchant from knowing the risks involved in renting land or buying crops. Mr. Todd suggested a merchant should ask to see a producer's map and Mr. Edwards stated that a grower's written request to breach confidentiality to a named merchant would be accepted by D.A.F.S.

Mr. Mabbot collected the copies of a map he had tabled for illustrative purposes, which he proposed to revise and modify (to preserve confidentiality) prior to re-issue later. In reply Mr. Todd stated that PCN risks applied to about half the Scottish seed producing area and the proposals were not simply to overcome export problems. In his capacity as Agent for overseas authorities, Mr. Mabbot explained, his own professional and personal reputation were very much at risk in respect of the issue of phyto-sanitary certificates and he stressed, most clearly, that he intended to be absolutely rigid in his advice before such certificates are issued.

In further reply, as to whether the time scale for introduction of the proposals would be in respect of 1982 tests for 1983 crop, Mr. Mabbot urged their introduction as soon as possible. Mr. John Arbuckle strongly supported this - in his view all concerned should take and be seen to be taking every possible step now. That today's meeting was so jointly constructive, he felt, was to be welcomed and furthered. During following discussion Mr. Todd pointed out that the Colleges' ability to do advisory soil-tests for exports would depend upon their resources. Mr. Mabbot stated these would be on a one-year basis only and that, while "banking" of official tests was useful, surplus testing in excess of 6,000 hectares per annum is a criminal waste of highly technical (and expensive) resources which are badly needed for more useful work in the industry's interests in other directions. Mr. Lindsay also suggested that "below-grader" sampling should be discontinued in favour of increased "in-bag" soil sampling.

The Chairman proposed that the Industry assume responsibility for Item 7 in D.A.F.S.' Paper, the Department take on Items 8 and 9, and that a small Working Party be formed to reconcile the complex details of Items 4, 5 and 6 of the Paper with the Industry's own proposals (above) and thereafter report back to the Panel. Mr. Lindsay explained S.P.T.A. could circularise its membership in a supportive, but advisory, capacity only. He strongly supported Mr. Hay's urging that these matters must not be communicated to the news media. He felt the Working Party should consist of 6 Industry representatives with Messrs. A. Edwards and T. Mabbot. It was agreed Messrs. D.H. Lindsay and J.R. McArthur (SPTA), J. Hay and J. McLaren (NFUS) with R. Smith (SSPA and covering the Secretarial function) would represent the Industry.

In conclusion the Industry raised no objections to Annex C of the Paper. On Mr. McLaren's suggestion Mr. Todd agreed to increase its attention-catching (perhaps printing on coloured paper). It was intended to introduce it on 2nd November, 1981. In reply to Mr. Lindsay regarding the criteria to govern its issue, Mr. Mabbot stated that any infestation anywhere in any field under test must render that test suspect. In reply to Mr. Hay, Mr. Todd stated the Department's PCN test records possibly extend back to 1950 but their use would depend on the administrative effort and cost involved.

POTATO
RING ROT
SURVEY:

Mr. Todd introduced and enlarged upon his letter of 6th October, 1981. He stressed that the samples will be selected by a European sampler and explained it was a one year only exercise. It was proposed to pay a nominal fee of £25 for each sample (to recompense for the cost of raw materials and for the nuisance involved) which hopefully could be recovered from E.E.C. funds. During discussion, Dr. Howell stated that Ring Rot had never been found in the U.K. but trading, through E.E.C. links, was nowadays much more relaxed. In reply to Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Todd believed it was doubtful that any confusion will (or even can) occur to impair maintenance of the identity of Scottish samples.

ANY OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) Register of Classified Stocks - In reply to Mr. McLaren it was stated that the requisite information had been submitted to the printer three days later than in 1980. Current estimates indicated the Register will be issued by mid-November, 1981.

(b) Date of next meeting - D.A.F.S. intended to pre-circulate the 1981 crop statistics pending the outcome of the Working Party meetings. It was expected that the Panel could meet again, to discuss both, by about end January/early February time.

(c) Retiral of Dr. J. Todd - The Chairman announced that Dr. Todd would be retiring at the end of November, 1981. With the unanimous support of those present, the Chairman extended the Panel's thanks to Dr. Todd for his valued services over many years and sincere best wishes for his long and happy retirement.

Mr. Hay proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair and to D.A.F.S. for its hospitality, whereupon the meeting closed.