

REPORT on a MEETING of the  
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL  
in Chesser House, EDINBURGH at  
10 a.m. on Friday, 4th FEBRUARY,  
1983.

- PRESENT:
- D.A.F.S. - Messrs. D.C. Todd, C.K. McIntosh and J. Hutchison, with Misses J.A. Gardiner, A.H. Muir, S.E. Fraser and E.M. Dickie in attendance.
  - Scientific Services - Dr. P.J. Howell, Messrs. J.R. Cutler, D. Hall, T. Mabbot, C. Quinn, M. Richardson and Mrs. L. Turle.
  - N.F.U.S. - Messrs. J.W. Hay and J.A. McLaren, with Mrs. J. Armstrong in attendance.
  - P.M.B. - Mr. H.A.C. Davie (vice Mr. J. McFarlane).
  - R.H.A.S. - Mr. A.H. Campbell.
  - S.A.C.'s - Dr. R.W. Lang
  - S.A.O.S. - Mr. W.T. Aitken (vice Mr. J. Arbuckle)
  - S.P.T.A. - Messrs. J.G.H. Fenton and J.R. McArthur, with D. Blackmore in attendance.
  - S.S.P.D.C. - Mr. John Bethel.
  - V.T.S.C.G.A. - Mr. H.A.C. Davie (also vice Mr. I. McKenzie).

Mr. D.C. Todd occupied the Chair. He welcomed those present and announced apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. J. McFarlane (P.M.B.), J. Arbuckle (S.A.O.S.) and I. McKenzie (S.S.P.D.C. and V.T.S.C.G.A.).

POTATO  
CYST  
NEMATODE:

Opening discussion of D.A.F.S.' pre-circulated Paper on P.C.N. developments and its two proposed changes, Mr. McIntosh reported that of 2100 timeous test applications received (by end August, 1982), 1800 test results were now known and the remaining 300 results should be known by the third week of the current month. The results from late applications were expected within a month thereafter. Overall, this position was four weeks earlier than last year. A letter had been sent to MAFF proposing extension of the "banking period" from 24 to 48 months. In respect that increasing winter cereal planting creates demand for early P.C.N. test results, extra early (explained) applications should cope with this problem.

Mr. Mabbot also reported that following development and adaptation work by his Branch during November and December, 1982 four Dutch P.C.N. testing machines have been ordered (at a cost of £12,000), delivery of the first of which being due at the end of March, 1983. He was hopeful all four machines will be installed and working for next season's tests.

Mr. McArthur asked why a cut off point of 10 dead cysts for acceptance for (planting) clearance had been determined (last para. head 4 of Paper). Mr. Mabbot explained the basis of this generally accepted compromise but Mr. McArthur remained unhappy that this would penalise the success of planting resistant varieties. Following discussion, Mr. Mabbot stated he would happily accept a change if it was coupled with the introduction of post-crop testing. In reply to Mr. Hay, Mr. McIntosh stated the response to the introduction of the means to indicate whether test applications were for cropping or "banking" had been poor and/

and he agreed to Mr. McLaren's proposal that this point be emphasised in the "February Letter to Growers". In further reply to Mr. McLaren the circumstances of a particular substitution retest application failure were stated to have been due to total absence of any indication that the application was a substitution retest and it had been treated as a late application.

In reply to the Chairman's call for views on the two changes proposed in the Paper, Mr. McArthur preferred that the first (planting of resistant varieties) should be advisory not mandatory. In the ensuing discussion he pointed out that should the advice not be followed, the intention to restrict the spread of P.C.N. within Scotland could be achieved by downgrading the offending crop to AA Class to prevent its further entry into the Scottish Scheme. Mr. Mabbot felt that with only a small acreage involved firmness should be retained, but the Chairman agreed the point would be re-considered.

In respect of Mr. McArthur's earlier remarks the Chairman felt that the "100 viable cysts" limitation included in the second proposed change should be revised. Mr. Mabbot was in favour of descheduling land for ware production of resistant varieties (to reduce P.C.N. infestations) but was particularly anxious to avoid wasting P.C.N.-testing resources and time. After brief discussion it was agreed this limitation be amended to "20 viable cysts" and the proposal be adopted.

REVISION OF REGULATIONS: Before discussion of D.A.F.S.' pre-circulated Paper and draft revised Regulations, Mr. McIntosh explained the draft still required some alterations. He proposed that "semantics" observations be routed to D.A.F.S. via each organisation (having previously numbered the pages consecutively for easier reference, please), allowing today's discussions to concentrate on actual changes. Principal among these (apart from changes agreed at the Panel's last meeting), the Chairman explained, was the since agreed introduction of the name "Elite" for the improved AAL Class. As paras. 3 and 4 of this Paper explained D.A.F.S. would prefer to retain the name "Foundation Stock" until this Class is further reduced to two (or even one) year, before renaming it "Super Elite".

Mr. Bethel stated he was absolutely clear that the whole industry supported a simultaneous change from "Foundation Stock" to "Super Elite". The industry did not like change for its own sake but, while a "salesman's" case might be made for two separate changes, where two changes have to be made they should be made at one time. Further, international markets (including England and Wales) generally are already cognisant with and accept "Super Elite" (SE) and "Elite" (E) classes. Messrs. Fenton, Hay and Davie all confirmed their respective organisations' support for this view.

Mr. McIntosh supported the Chairman's view that this would require V.T.S.C. to be changed (to S) as well and that a "Super Elite" class should be reduced to only two years. Mr. McArthur pointed out that changing V.T.S.C. (which was not sold furth of Scotland) would be irrelevant and Mr. Hall warned against the dangers of too sudden a reduction of two years in FS stocks.

In the light of the industry's clear preference for simultaneous introduction of "Super Elite" the Chairman felt D.A.F.S. should re-consider the matter, taking account of the further views of MAFF, Northern Ireland and others.

Mr. Hall urged the meeting to consider reducing the one-third of surface area tolerance of Para. 17(6) (introduced in 1978 to be in line with EEC standards) to (its former) one fourth of surface area, to counter criticism of the proposed increase in the tolerance for powdery scab from 3% to 4%. Although this proposal enjoyed support it was agreed each organisation should submit its considered views to D.A.F.S. in due course.

DISEASE STATISTICS: Arising from his perusal of the pre-circulated disease statistics Mr. Fenton/

Mr. Fenton noted the increase of Leaf Roll in the 1982 crop and enquired as to the prospects for 1983. Explaining that 1981 and 1982 had both been "severe" years for this disease, Mrs. Turle stated that 10% overall of all crops now contained it but in respect of Maris Piper the infection level is 20%. In this light D.A.F.S. is stressing the use of systemic aphicide granules at planting and thorough roguing during growth of the 1983 crop.

The Chairman noted that there had been some improvement in the Blackleg situation during 1982. Mr. Quinn explained it has been clearly shown that earliest possible harvesting and speedy removal into store provided the best defence against this disease. He also stated that research has established survival of the disease in the sea, representing a serious feature. In reply to Mr. McLaren, Mr. Hutchison stated 150 crops were given a third inspection because they had not been burned off by the due date, of which 9 crops were downgraded for Blackleg.

Mr. Quinn also felt that comparisons with figures for earlier years indicate an unlikelihood of a return to former Blackleg infection levels. He also strongly suspected that flailing/pulverising of potato crops aids the spread of Blackleg and he would continue to recommend against it. Mr. Laing felt this advice applied only in wet conditions, the very conditions in which other methods of haulm destruction could be more difficult to employ but Mr. Quinn disagreed, although accepting that survival is considerably reduced in dry conditions.

In conclusion of this Item the Chairman commented on the P.C.N. testing statistics, the areas scheduled and descheduled and the labelling inspections statistics provided.

"FEBRUARY  
LETTER":

Before discussion of the pre-circulated draft of D.A.F.S. proposed "February Letter to Growers", Mr. McIntosh asked that the final paragraph of Sect.6 thereof be deleted.

In reply to Mr. Laing, Messrs. McIntosh and Hutchison stated that all requests for early inspections had been fulfilled and no problems had been reported. Brief discussion of this point touched on the next Item in the Agenda, the Chairman pointing out that movement towards increased use of full-time inspections staff must also increase Scheme costs.

Mr. Fenton asked how the cost of labels was calculated. D.A.F.S. explained the charges were based solely upon staff time used and travelling costs involved.

GROWING  
CROP  
INSPECTIONS  
1983:

Turning to consideration of D.A.F.S.' pre-circulated Paper, Mr. Hutchison affirmed the liaison-improvement purpose of the Working Group's survey. In considering its recommendations a "potatoes only" inspectorate had not been accepted and temporary labour (although reduced) was likely to remain a feature of the Scheme. It was now proposed to introduce a limited number of single (full-time) inspector inspections on a trial basis in 1983 and in the light of experience thus gained, to continue, to extend or to scrap the trial in subsequent years.

In reply to Mr. Campbell, the Chairman stated that it was expected that one inspector would cover the same area as two. He explained this would tend to identify with the Dutch system and (in reply to Mr. Fenton) he felt that a single full-time inspector could be expected to cover more than half of the area inspected by two temporary seasonal inspectors. In further reply to Mr. Davie it was stated that the number of drills to be walked had not been worked out in detail yet.

Following further brief discussion the meeting agreed to accept the outlined proposals on a trial basis.

LABELLING  
SCHEME:

Introducing D.A.F.S.' pre-circulated Paper, Mr. McIntosh referred to several instances disclosing a need to restore security to prevent fraud in the arrangements for the issue of seed potato labels. While it was not/

not intended to return to the former (pre-postal strike) rigidity of signed applications with payments before labels are issued, signed application forms are to be required meantime. As soon as improved grower/inspector liaison can be achieved then more elasticity in these arrangements will be justified.

In reply to Mr. McArthur, Mr. McIntosh explained that it had not been possible to prosecute the most blatant offenders. Notification did not reach D.A.F.S. until two months after the offences had been committed and legal proceedings had to be instituted within three months of the date of the offence. This latter aspect was now being reviewed.

The Meeting fully supported the need for the proposed tightening of the security arrangements.

A.O.C.B: Crop Register - Mr. Fenton expressed the extreme concern felt throughout the industry over the very late publication of the 1982 Register of Basic Seed Potato Crops. Mr. McIntosh expressed his personal annoyance and extreme regret that this had been so. He explained in some detail the computer arrangements and procedures within D.A.F.S. and the increasing difficulties of sharing of mainframe facilities within the whole Scottish Office. He accepted Mr. Fenton's pressure to advance the publication date in 1983 and he undertook to press the industry's case very hard, expecting to succeed in improving publication by a month in 1983. It was Mr. Bethel's view that the industry must insist on the most efficient use of resources to provide the most valuable information as quickly as possible.

Consultative Machinery - The Chairman enquired whether the Meeting felt thought should be given to the Consultative Panel's composition and function within the totality of consultation by which D.A.F.S. obtains the industry's views on the operation of the various aspects of the Scheme.

For N.F.U.S., Mr. Hay was not attracted to change in the present arrangements. For S.P.T.A., Mr. Fenton felt the Consultative Panel provided a unique opportunity for widely-based, in-depth discussions, but wondered if the Chairman's point might be met by D.A.F.S. representation on the industry's own existing Seed Trade Committee. It was agreed the Chairman's enquiry be considered by each constituent organisation for replies in due course.

On behalf of those present Mr. Hay recorded appreciation of D.A.F.S. hospitality and his proposed vote of thanks to the Chair received unanimous support, thereby formally concluding the Meeting.