

REPORT on a MEETING of the JOINT
(NASPM/SPTA) LIAISON COMMITTEE with
the DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
FISHERIES FOR SCOTLAND in Chesser
House, EDINBURGH at 2.30 p.m. on
Wednesday, 12th OCTOBER, 1983.

PRESENT: D.A.F.S. - Messrs. C.K. McIntosh, D. Hall (East Craigs), J. Hutchison (Inspectorate), Misses J. Gardiner, A. Muir and Mrs. McCracken.

N.A.S.P.M. - Messrs. E.F. Sherriff, H.N. Aves, C.J. Baker, J.B. Hollywood and P.E. Smith.

S.P.T.A. - Messrs. J.E. Cook, J.G.H. Fenton, D.H. Lindsay, J.R. McArthur and T. McClung, with D. Blackmore in attendance.

Mr. C.K. McIntosh took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were recorded on behalf of Messrs. J.H. Barr and R.D. Hunter (both SPTA).

BURNING

DOWN DATES: Mr. Baker explained that NASPM sought confirmation that Scottish growers, in fact, do know and understand the arrangements for burning down. The Chairman invited the SPTA views and to these Mr. Hutchison added that every classification document issued states the burning down date. He further explained that of all 1248 VTSC crops entered for inspection in 1983, 463 which were not timeously burned down were inspected for a third time and only one of these had to be downgraded. For FS early crops, the figures were 957 crops, 592 third inspections and 29 crop downgraded. These compared with 1982 figures of 899 crops, 150 third inspections and only 8 crops downgraded.

The Chairman stressed that the arrangements were designed and introduced to prevent the spread of disease. They ensure that each crop is quite dead within 21 days of its final inspection but he accepted that the arrangement instructions would have to be further clarified for 1984.

The discussions turning to the merits or otherwise of the various burning-down chemicals, the Chairman stated that "Deftor" is to be considered but a lot more evidence is required from East Craigs and the Colleges. Mr. Sherriff added that acid gives the best results and is particularly helpful in blight conditions.

TREATMENT
OF SEED:

Mr. Sherriff introduced this Item by outlining the Committee's morning discussions and its decision to search out information on the residual effects on seed potatoes of chemical used in farming activities. The Chairman explained that DAFS' inability to police such uses ruled out any possibility of any form of statutory control over them.

During discussions Mr. Hall stated that in response to reports from Cambridge about two years ago, East Craigs had begun exploratory work on "Roundup". This had disclosed that at a one-twentieth part of the makers' recommended concentration this chemical caused extensive rotting in seed potato tubers and 6% blanking in daughter crops. In reply to Mr. Smith, Mr. Hall further stated that there is no evidence that "Roundup" is ground persistent.

Mr. Baker pressed for an awareness campaign, stressing the need to clean all equipment thoroughly after use and highlighting the sensitivity of potato crops to minute chemical dosages by drift, etc. The Chairman explained DAFS considered a "Forum" which would report back/

back to the Consultative Panel would thus involve the Trade. In reply to Mr. Cook, Mr. Hall was prepared to release the results of East Craigs' limited trials to date.

NEW SEED

POTATO

REGULATIONS:

The Chairman explained it is hoped that the revised Regulations will be in print in about four weeks time and the intention is that they will be in force for planting of the 1984 Crop. An English suggestion for a total reconsideration, which would have prevented the 1984 introduction, had been rejected. DAFS was preparing an explanatory letter, by way of warning, for circularisation in a few days time.

Mr. Baker explained that NASPM had queried the wording of Clause 5(2)(a) with MAFF. Following discussion, the Chairman's view was that DAFS did not see a need to change this wording. In the SPTA view it was felt the Trade should decide in accordance with the customers' instructions. The Chairman also explained that in view of NASPM concern in respect of the VTSC point, the words "remained free" would be changed to "has been kept free".

A.O.C.B:

(a) Labelling Regulations - The Chairman explained that DAFS is in course of tightening up the application of the Labelling Regulations. He asked the NASPM representatives to arrange for NASPM members to notify DAFS immediately if they suspect that any seed potatoes from Scotland are not labelled strictly in accordance with those Regulations.

(b) Down-grade Labelling - Mr. Cook asked for DAFS' views and comments on this topic. The Chairman explained that DAFS had every sympathy for the need for this facility on occasions and followed a more liberal policy nowadays. Speaking in support of the practice, Mr. Aves stated it was a great help in Northern Ireland.

(c) Scab in 1983 - Mr. Fenton referred to the high incidence of Scab in the 1983 Crop and asked that the Department's Inspectorate be allowed some discretion in tuber inspections. The Chairman was sympathetic to the problem and stated DAFS wanted to help but was struck with either adhering to E.E.C. Rules and the existing tolerances or applying for derogation and using brown sub-standard labels. He felt the matter should be looked at again later in the Season, possibly in a situation where only scabby stocks remained to meet unfilled orders.

(d) Seed Potato Consultative Panel - In a further reply, the Chairman stated that the next meeting of the Consultative Panel would take place about the end of January next, this seeming to be the most preferred time for all concerned.

Mr. Sherriff then moved a Vote of Thanks to DAFS for its hospitality and for a worthwhile and enjoyable meeting which was thereupon concluded.