

REPORT on a MEETING of the  
SEED TRADE COMMITTEE held at  
8 Manor Place, EDINBURGH at  
10.30 a.m. on Wednesday,  
8th FEBRUARY, 1984.

PRESENT: N.F.U.S. Messrs. J.W. Hay and J.A. McLaren, with Mrs. J. Armstrong  
in attendance.

S.P.T.A. Messrs. J.E. Cook, K.A. McKenzie and J.R. McArthur, with  
R. David Hunter and D. Blackmore in attendance.

S.S.P.D.C. Mr. John Bethel

V.T.S.C.G.A. Mr. I. McKenzie, with H.A.C. Davie in attendance.

Mr. John Bethel took the Chair and welcomed those present at the meeting, called to discuss the Agenda for the meeting of the Seed Potato Consultative Panel on 10th February, 1984.

1. 1983 Growing Crop Inspection Scheme (Paper No. 1). Mr. Hay offered no comment. Mr. Davie felt the increased incidence of leaf roll and severe mosaic was worrying. Mr. Bethel reported his discussion with Mrs. Turl indicating a ten-year cycle in aphid activity. She is to inform the Panel that if aphids are prevalent in 1984, we face an explosion of aphid-borne diseases in 1985. Mr. Hay felt it would be wrong to over-react and, while expecting that DAFS will urge husbandry control, it was agreed the Press should not be alerted. Mr. McLaren pointed out that a shorter multiplication chain will help to flush infection from stocks.

2. Single man inspections (Paper No. 2). Mr. Hay reported that after a small sample of members, NFUS viewed the arrangements as very thorough and no criticism had been voiced. Although not involved, VTSC growers pointed out that re-inspection back-up was available and the arrangements help earlier inspections. SPTA endorsed these views and pointed out that some Lothians area crop inspections had been done by tuber inspectors. This was seen as helping psychologically, on similar lines to Dutch and Irish practice. The Committee agreed to compliment DAFS on the outcome.

3. P.C.N. - (a) Statutory Soil Testing (Paper No.3). For NFUS Mr. Hay welcomed the improvements achieved but pointed out that the Paper made no mention of increasing the "banking period" from two to three years. It was agreed Mr. Hay would raise this point at the Panel meeting. Mr. K. McKenzie felt that in view of the extensive recent changes that had taken place, DAFS should circularise a resumé/explanatory leaflet, separate from the February Newsletter plus/or with labels from local offices, to include a reminder to show intended direction of drilling on test applications. The Committee agreed to press this proposal at the Panel meeting.

(b) pre-export testing (Paper No.4). The Chairman called for comment on the suddenness etc. of the arrangements and (adding historical explanation) asked if the trade was happy with the system. In SPTA's view, although under-dresser sampling is not acceptable, the system should be encouraged, as should inspector communication. It was also felt that para.6 (disposal of infested consignments) was the best available compromise. Care would be required in respect of brushing, which might increase the spread of blackleg and could also attract objections from English and Algerian quarters.

The Committee noted the intention that the exporter should bear the costs of testing. Mr. Cook pointed out that DAFS doesn't like rush but, for commercial reasons, a rush is frequently unavoidable. DAFS seem prepared to impede necessary activities in pursuit of a more orderly sequence of events. Mr. McLaren felt the Committee should not go too deep and (supported by Mr. Hay) pointed out the impossibility of identifying/



identifying exports at crop level. It was agreed to try to confine Panel discussion to payment for testing and to keep a low profile.

4. Crop Husbandry Advice to Growers (Paper 5). A full discussion of this topic led to agreement that DAFS' initiative is designed to defuse political ambitions. The Committee agreed to insist that the proposed "Technical Group" should report back to the Panel (albeit that this would entail more frequent Panel meetings) for practical influence, before policy is defined and implemented.

5. "February Letter to Growers" (Paper 6). The Chairman read out a letter from Mr. J.H. Barr objecting to the ideas embodied in para.2 of this Paper (requiring a label and an Invoice for "bought-in" seed). Supporting Mr. Barr's objection, Mr. Hay took further, particular exception to the final sentence of the paragraph (requiring retention of a proportion of labels for subsequent inspector examination). He felt this must be resisted - the Regulations put the onus on the seller and this must not be shifted onto the buyer. Mr. McLaren felt the "cowboys" should be pursued without penalising the whole industry. The Committee agreed to press DAFS to abandon this proposal.

For VTSCGA, Mr. I. McKenzie questioned the meaning of "compulsory tuber treatment" in para. 3 of this Paper. Tuber treatment is presently "recommended", and it is intended to retain this form in the proposed "Code of VTSC Production Practice". Mr. K. McKenzie also felt the Committee should seek a preview of DAFS' intended circularisation on the new Regulations. (Agenda Item 6 - Oral Report - refers).

7. Waiting List of VTSC Raiser Applicants (Paper 7). Mr. I. McKenzie explained the historical background of this topic, leading to the present agreement that no more raisers should be authorised until present numbers are reduced. It is hoped that the introduction of the proposed Code of Practice will help in "weeding out". The NFUS fully supported disciplinary action to "weed out". Mr. McArthur asked whether the efficiency of new applicants is measured. In summary, the Chairman saw a need to maintain a limit on the number of authorised raisers (whether at the present level or less) and each year take out all (whether one, or ten) who do not achieve the pre-set standards. Mr. McLaren also urged that the proposed Code of Practice must include a standard of tuber quality. The Committee agreed to provide DAFS with fullest support for disciplinary action to resolve this problem.

8. Chemical Treatments (Paper 8). Mr. Cook explained the circumstances underlying SPTA's pressure on DAFS and SPTA's view that, although a ban on the use of tecnazene was clearly in prospect and merited support, its use when specifically ordered by a customer must continue to be permitted. SPTA was, however, totally opposed to random sampling for chemicals because this could create insurmountable commercial difficulties and dangers. In SPTA's view DAFS should first carry out a fully exploratory survey. SPTA was currently much more concerned with the whole problem of chemicals, in its widest sense. In this light SPTA was prepared to accept parts 7(a) and 7(c) of Paper 8, but urged rejection of part 7(b). For NFUS, Messrs. Hay and McLaren pledged support for the SPTA view.

9. Proposed Higher Voluntary Standard Scheme (Paper 9). Mr. McLaren spoke at some length in support of this proposed Scheme, included in the Agenda on behalf of NFUS. Mr. I. McKenzie pointed out that the present seed potato standards are already very high indeed and Mr. McArthur stated that DAFS' support for this proposal would highlight the fact that the present standards are not being efficiently enforced. He stressed that high quality produce will always sell, it is bottom quality produce (that drags the market down) that demands attention. Mr. McLaren pressed the proposal hard, supported by Mr. Bethel. Mr. Hay accepted the need for increased policing of less accessible grading points but felt the Paper was worthy of wider consideration and discussion.

10. A.O.C.B. - (a) Mr. McLaren proposed the Committee should seek DAFS' views on improving the speed of issue of labels. Mr. McArthur felt the reason for dating of labels should also be raised. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to put these points to the Panel.

(b) Mr. K. McKenzie proposed that pressure to improve the speed of issue of the annual Crop Register must be maintained. The Committee gave its full support to this point.

The meeting closed with a unanimous vote of thanks to the Chair.