

REPORT on a MEETING of the  
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL  
in Chesser House, EDINBURGH at  
10 a.m. on Friday, 10th FEBRUARY,  
1984.

PRESENT:

D.A.F.S. Messrs. C.K. McIntosh and J. Hutchison, with Mrs. C. McCracken and the Misses E.M. Dickie and S.E. Fraser in attendance.

Scientific Services - Messrs. J.R. Cutler, D. Hall, C.Quinn, M. Richardson, T. Mabbot and Mrs. L. Turl.

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

P.M.B. Mr. A.A. Arbuckle.

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

S.A.C.'s Dr. R.W. Laing.

S.A.O.S. Mr. W.T. Aitken.

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

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

V.T.S.C.G.A. Mr. I. McKenzie.

Mr. C.K. McIntosh took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting. He intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Mr. D.C. Todd and Misses J.R. Gardiner and A.H. Muir (DAFS) Dr. P.J. Howell (Scientific Services). He explained that Mr. A.A. Arbuckle had replaced Mr. J. McFarlane (PMB) and Mr. W.T. Aitken had replaced Mr. J. Arbuckle (SAOS). In reply to the Chair Mr. Arbuckle reported on Mr. J. Arbuckle's continuing recovery and the Panel conveyed its unanimous best wishes in this respect.

The Chairman also welcomed Messrs. J.E. Cook and K.A. McKenzie (SPTA) to their first Panel meeting and formally introduced Mrs. Carol McCracken as having temporary responsibility for reviewing support and piloting revised Regulations through the legislative process.

The Chairman spoke briefly on the current 1983/84 Season. He felt that exports of 30,000 tonnes of seed to today's date, compared with 45,000 tonnes (the total for that year) at the comparable date last Season, was not too bad in the special circumstances. He also regretted that little improvement in the date of publication of the Crop Register had been possible, due to the overall lateness of the Season. The issue of a draft of the Register had seemed to work quite well and he enquired if a probable repeat of this arrangement in 1984 will be helpful. Mr. Cook explained he would be raising this point under Item 10 (A.O.C.B.) of today's Agenda. The Chairman also stated that an internal review of procedures is under way and he announced there will be no change in 1983 Inspections etc. fees for 1984. Turning to the Agenda he introduced

Item 1 - 1983 Growing Crop Inspection Scheme (Paper 1). Mr. Hutchison commented briefly on the pre-issued statistics. Mr. Hall added that VTSC pass (431 ha., 86% of entered) was the highest ever recorded. FSI pass rate was 96%. Blackleg did not materialise. Mrs. Turl confirmed the expected increase in Leaf Roll had occurred, 1983 being the third early aphid migration year in succession. She stated that 13% of Scottish/

Scottish crops now contain Leaf Roll, which is not satisfactory. It was also of concern that visible Leaf Roll within the tolerance which is not rogued out increases the infection carried forward and multiplied in the following year. Late emergence of the 1983 crop had reduced spread of this disease but advice to the Colleges will depend on results of the March 1984 aphid survival survey. In Dundee the Vector Pressure in the last week in July 83 (normally expected 60) was 400, which increased to 1,000 a week later.

Mr. Quinn was happy enough with the incidence of blackleg in the 1983 growing crop. He stressed the importance of early burning down and lifting and he was opposed to haulm pulverisation when this could be avoided. He felt more information on the chemicals used to burn down would be helpful and the Chairman invited the industry's assistance to this end. Mr. Mabbot and Dr. Laing also added comments on the Paper. Discussion also included roguing problems and the reported "breakdown" of Piper.

Item 2 - Single Man Inspections (Paper 2). During discussion, Mr. Hutchison stated DAFS does not foresee eventual discontinuation of temporary inspectors. In DAFS' view the single-man arrangements worked well (the Panel agreed with Mr. I. McKenzie that they were essential for "earlies" crops) and it was agreed they will be repeated in 1984.

Item 3 - P.C.N. (a) Statutory Soil Testing (Paper 3). In introduction and comment it was stated there were 435 late test applications. Explaining the timetable, Mr. Mabbot stressed that earlier end of tests allows an earlier start and still better improvements. Mr. Hay congratulated the Department for having overcome this problem, late tests (being inevitable) apart. He called (a) for extension of the "banking" period from two to three years and (b) proposed every grower should be sent a separate leaflet setting out the present "rules". The Chairman stated (a) last year's procedures will be repeated in 1984 (DAFS is very sympathetic - delay is due to MAPF - it is hoped this will allow a switch to PCN legislation) and (b) this proposal will be seriously considered.

(b) Pre-export testing (Paper 4). The Chairman explained this system is costly and DAFS cannot continue to bear it. While looking to reduce costs, this will be offset if the system is extended to countries other than Morocco. Mr. Bethel reported the trading organisations welcomed the system since it prevents "whole cargo" rejections and explained that it was important that countries requiring this service always understood the commercial cost involved. The dilemma arises because Scottish exporters do not speak for the principal exporters who, it is agreed, should bear this cost.

The Chairman suggested a sub-committee should investigate this matter direct with the principal exporters. Mr. Bethel confirmed that the trading organisations will support DAFS and agreed with the suggestion, Mr. Cook receiving assurance that the result will be reported back to the Panel. Mr. Mabbot welcomed the trading organisations' inputs on this matter and Mr. McLaren warned of the impossibility of identifying exports at growing crop level.

Item 4 - Crop husbandry advice to growers (Paper 5). The Chairman sought Panel approval to set up a Technical Group with a view to achieving a single, Scotland-wide forum, principally to co-ordinate the Colleges' advisory function but which could secondarily receive matters referred to it by the Panel. SPTA expressed disappointment that industry representation would be excluded while Dr. Laing stated he would welcome such representation but not in such a forum. Mr. K. McKenzie felt the proposal would require the Panel to meet more often. NFUS called for inclusion of industry representation on such matters as are referred by the Panel. Noting these points the Chairman explained the constituent organisations are free to submit Papers for consideration by the Panel.

Item 5/

Item 5 - "February Letter" to Growers (Paper 6). The Chairman highlighted three special points for consideration; (a) confusion in burning down arrangements; (b) label support for applications for inspections of crops grown from bought-in seed and (c) proposed Code of VTSC Raisers Practice.

Dr. Laing welcomed clarification under (a). He felt revision re "Deftor" was necessary, dry weather and some non-availability of sulphuric acid causes problems. Following general discussion, the Chairman stressed that DAFS wants to be helpful.

The Chairman explained (b) was inspectorate-inspired, to ensure verification of actual stock planted. SPTA pointed out that often no Invoice exists for bought-in seed which, the Chair pointed out, contravened Regulations. Mr. Cook, supported by Mr. Hay, pointed out that the inspection statistics do not reveal the suspected problem and it would be unacceptable to penalise the whole industry for the sake of a few offenders. The Chairman expressed concern at the revealed extent of Regulations breaches and agreed to defer the Invoice requirement for further consideration and, in reply to Mr. K. McKenzie, agreed to amend "proportion" to "few" labels to be retained for inspectors' perusal.

For VTSCGA, in respect of (c) above, Mr. I. McKenzie clarified a maincrop/early crop amendment before raising the introduction of "compulsory" tuber treatment. Mr. Hall agreed the current code of practice says "should", but the new Code will say "must, in a manner acceptable to DAFS" (whose requirements are being finalised). Mr. McKenzie foresaw practical problems in this respect but Mr. Hall gave an assurance that flexibility will be allowed. It was also confirmed that the survey results will be discussed with the VTSCGA before their introduction into the new Code of Practice.

In conclusion, Mr. Bethel enquired if the revised draft February letter is to be considered by the constituent Organisations at a Panel meeting before being issued and the Chairman explained the timetable could not meet this eventuality.

Item 6 - Revised Seed Potato Regulations - (Oral Report). The Panel took note of an explanatory Paper tabled at the meeting, supplemented and updated to the present position verbally by Mrs. McCracken. It was made clear that the new Regulations will apply to the 1984 - planted crop, the 1983 - planted crop continuing to be dealt with under the old 1978 Regulations. The principal changes were in respect of changed nomenclature, surface area criteria, increased maximum container size (now 1 tonne) and removal of previous restrictions on the use of information in prosecutions.

Item 7 - Waiting list of VTSC Raiser Applicants (Paper 7) - The Chairman explained the problem of political and other pressure on DAFS. For NFUS Mr. Hay stated that official authorisation should not be a licence for life and DAFS should not be chary of withdrawing licences. The Chairman and Mr. Hall countered this view but, supported by SPTA, NFUS urged that plant health should not be the only criterion to the exclusion of tuber quality (on which latter point Messrs. McLaren and K. McKenzie both enlarged forcibly). Mr. Bethel stated the industry supports DAFS both on admissions and dismissals provided they are even-handed. The Chairman asked each Organisation to write confirming this support and he proposed to remit the matter to joint DAFS/ VTSCGA resolution. Mr. Hutchison expressed concern over allegations of bad VTSC dressing, which he intended to investigate thoroughly.

Item 8 - Chemical Treatments (Paper No. 8) - The Chairman suggested this Item fell into two parts - undeclared treatments and the use of tecnazene itself. In reply, the trading Organisations gave full support to re-enforcement of implementation of statutory requirements. Dr. Laing pointed out that tuber sampling proposals would encounter the problem of differentiation between treatment or contamination, but the Chairman explained/

explained the proposals were part "policing" and part "encouragement".

For SPTA, Mr. Cook gave full support to conclusions 7(a) and 7 (c) of the Paper, but recorded 100% opposition to 7(b), preferring that a full-scale investigation be first undertaken. NFUS supported this latter proposal which should include all chemicals. The Chairman stated that unless there were counter-proposals DAFS would proceed. Mr. Cook also referred to "Roundup" and it was agreed to issue non-specific warnings via ESCA etc.

Item 9 - Proposed Higher Voluntary Standard (Paper 9) - The Chairman explained this Item had been included at the instance of NFUS, on the basis that only DAFS can launch it. While he felt it has some points in its favour DAFS is prepared to shelve it to let the trading Organisations discuss it further. Mr. I. McKenzie pointed out that even with 100% inspections, VTSC had not been improved. Mr. Hay confirmed the Trading Organisations had agreed to look at the proposals again.

Item 10 - A.O.C.B - (a) Delays in issue of labels For SPTA Mr. Cook explained there had been some instances of considerable delay in the issue of labels from certain Area Offices. The Chairman stated that a review had indicated overall adequacy, but current re-organisation could increase the numbers of Area Offices. He also agreed to investigate the possibility of date extension on labels (perhaps to a 2-month spread).

(b) Crop Register - SPTA urged that the Computer print-out arrangements in 1983 should not become a regular feature, to inhibit earlier publication of the printed Register. The Chairman stated this problem was receiving sustained attention and he was able to report some evidence of successful progress in his reformatory initiatives.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chair, proposed by Mr. Hay and enjoying unanimous support.