

REPORT on a MEETING of the
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL
in Chesser House, EDINBURGH at
10 a.m. on Friday, 8th FEBRUARY,
1985.

- PRESENT:
- D.A.F.S. - Messrs. D.C. Todd, C.K. McIntosh, J. Hutchison and W. Boyd, with Miss J. Gardiner, Mrs. M. Barnes and Miss D. Pearson in attendance.
 - Scientific Services - Messrs. J.R. Cutler, D. Hall, P.J. Howell, 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. A.A. Arbuckle.
 - R.H.A.S. - (not represented)
 - S.A.C.'s - Dr. R.W. Laing
 - S.A.O.S. - (not represented)
 - S.P.T.A. - Messrs. J.E. Cook and K.A. McKenzie, with D. Blackmore in attendance.
 - S.S.P.D.C. - Messrs. I. McKenzie and J. Bethel
 - V.T.S.C.G.A. - Mr. R. Cumming, with C. Davie in attendance.

APOLOGIES:

Mr. D.C. Todd took the Chair and welcomed and introduced those present at the meeting, recording apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. A.H. Campbell (R.H.A.S.) and W.T. Aitken (S.A.O.S.). He enquired after Mr. John Arbuckle's recovery and asked Mr. A.A. Arbuckle to convey the Panel's unanimous good wishes to his brother.

REVIEW:

In a review of the current state of the Scottish Seed potato industry in reply to the Chair, Mr. McIntosh highlighted the prospective total exports of 75,000 tonnes and the effects of the new Regulations. He explained that DAFS was not pressing for generation limitations but was still looking for its eventual introduction. The whole industry was looking for a quieter time than had prevailed in recent years and, while regretting repeated Register publication delays, promised that improvements were being energetically pursued. He also referred to the excellent DAFS/Trade co-operation in the export field and stated the first-ever shipment to Cuba is to be followed up by a "consolidation" visit there by himself and Mr. Mabbot in seven weeks time. He remarked on the need to identify particular crops with particular export orders and the increasing trend of co-operative to co-operative trading. He apologised to the Panel for having "jumped the gun" (in August, 1984) in respect of requiring invoices in support of 1984 applications for inspections (no offence intended), but confirmed this would be a requirement for 1985.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(a) Burning down dates - Discussion revealed pressure for compulsory dates from NASPM (Mr. Cook), English NFU (Mr. Hay) and ADAS (Mr. Todd). Mr. Hall pointed out MAFF had introduced compulsory dates in the English High Grade Seed Area in 1984 but the Scottish system is to be adopted there in 1985. The Panel felt the pressure was to reduce Scotch "Tops" competition with English ware, though aspid-spread may have some bearing. The Panel agreed present arrangements in Scotland are satisfactory.

(b) Roquing - SPTA noted classification of 87% of entered crops reflected/

reflected high roguing standards and enquired the nature of any difficulties. Mr. Hutchison agreed the results were better than last year but felt patchiness could be due to rogues relying on high health standard of seed. Mr. McIntosh suggested poor patches be identified and notified to SPTA and NFUS. Dr. Laing stated the Colleges want to increase refresher courses, particularly for disease recognition.

(c) Riddle sizes - The Chairman explained the position following a reconsideration of requirements and seed not graded in multiples of 5mm.

(d) Invoices with inspections applications - Mr. Cook pointed out that the requirement notified in August, 1984 for introduction in 1985 was not practical, since many growers do not provide Invoices for their sales. In response NFUS asked if the "some labels" requirement is not working. Mr. McIntosh pointed out that issue of a proper Invoice is a statutory requirement and explained his serious concern to identify the source of planted seed. Following Mr. Cook's explanations re invoices, delivery notes, etc. it was agreed some form of documentary evidence is likely to be available. Mr. Hay, supported Mr. Cook's view and, accepting that the burden of proof in an investigation rests with the grower, he felt that only at that point would documentary evidence become necessary. Mrsrs. Cook and McLaren supported this view. Mr. McIntosh pointed out that, strictly speaking, classification can be refused without documentary evidence of source but, to avoid creating paper mountains and all the hassle, DAFS would accept this suggestion.

1984
INSPECTIONS
REPORT:

Mr. Hutchison stated that although early inspections caused staff to be stretched in some areas, 1984 growing crop inspections went very smoothly. The Panel discussed the pre-circulated detailed results in depth. Mr. Hall commented on VTSC results and Mrs. Turle spoke on the incidence and prospects of Leaf Roll, aspid survival and re-colonisation would be high unless severe weather occurs. On Blackleg, Mr. Quinn stated that due to two successive warm, dry growing seasons, the lowest incidence recorded since records started in 1964 showed 97% of crops were free from this disease. He also stated that Papers from a joint PMB/Potato Association of America conference on Blackleg in August, 1984 are to be published by the PMB in due course.

In the light of confirmed higher incidence of soft rots in irrigated crops, Mr. K. McKenzie felt that VTSC growers should be discouraged, restricted or even forbidden to irrigate their crops. Discussion showed the extent of the problem is not known and arrangements to monitor and to take monthly samples of VTSC water supplies were considered without conclusion. Dr. Laing thought much of the problem arose from over, or bad, irrigation.

Mr. Mabbot spoke on P.C.N. matters and in reply to Mr. K. McKenzie's concern that results from some October 1984 applications are still awaited, stated only 300 late application samples were in stock that morning. Mr. McIntosh explained that issue of 260 results received during the last few days is still being completed. In reply to Mr. Hay, Mr. McIntosh also stated that the level of tests is about 6,000 hectares down on last year, almost the same level as 1983, and that any Scheduling Orders made would not be retrospective. Mr. Bethel felt the Panel should congratulate DAFS for coping so well with extra export testing pressures, pointing out that such tests are extremely cost-effective and commercially extremely valuable. The Chairman responded with thanks.

In respect of discussion at the Panel's last meeting to aim for more labelling inspection visits without regard to tonnage considerations, Mr. Hutchison explained that while the number of visits made had changed little from 1983, this had to be viewed against the much increased pressure of export inspections. The Panel agreed with Mr. Cook's proposal that nevertheless, this policy guideline should be kept very much in mind.

SEED POTATO
REGULATIONS
1984:

In response to the Chairman's invitation for discussion of points arising from the introduction of the revised Regulations, no comments were offered.

1985 GROWING
CROP
INSPECTIONS:

(a) Application Forms - The Panel noted the intention to combine applications for Super Elite and Elite class inspections on a single form which, along with a separate form for application for VTSC inspections, reduced the former three separate forms to two.

(b) Inspections Fees - Pointing out that there had been no increase in inspection fees last year, the Chairman explained that the change indicated as a result of the foregoing paragraph was of a very minor nature and the Panel raised no objections.

TUBER
INSPECTION
FACILITIES:

Introducing DAFS' Paper 4, the Chairman explained that following upon the improvement resulting from North of Scotland's issue of advice, the East and South Colleges could follow suit. Mr. Hutchison added that the thrust of the approach (for growers to provide adequate facilities for Inspectors) was essentially educative and Mr. Mabbot promised to provide each Panel constituent with illustrative photographs. The Chairman explained the suggested facilities were voluntary, not mandatory, but that in the absence of adequate facilities, an Inspector can refuse to inspect. Mr. Mabbot pointed out the importance of this point in respect of exports and Mr. McLaren suggested the Development Council could publicise the matter at its growers meetings. In turn, Mr. Bethel's call for Panel support for DAFS enjoyed general agreement. In reply to Mr. Hay's suggestion to encourage overseas inspectors to visit dressing points, Mr. McIntosh explained insufficiency of numbers for this purpose created logistics problems which Mr. Bethel explained in full.

CHEMICAL
TREATMENTS:

Mr. McIntosh explained that following upon (pre-circulated) correspondence, DAFS felt that a decision on how best to proceed in respect of a ban on Tecnazene should await the result of 1985 Season experience. In reply to his request for clarification of the Trade's view, Mr. Cook felt that the message to the Scottish industry had already gone well and truly home. In reply to Mr. K. McKenzie, Mr. Hutchison stated that of 70 tuber samples taken, 50 had been tested and 13 of them had been found to contain very low traces of Tecnazene, indicative of contamination rather than treatment. Mr. McLaren supported a low key approach until the extent of the problem has been clarified and called for a repetition of 1984 publicity in the current Season. Mr. Bethel stated the South believes a ban has been imposed and he counselled legislative clarification in due course. The Panel endorsed Mr. Hutchison's call for continued testing and in reply to Mr. K. McKenzie during discussion, DAFS undertook to try to prosecute if treatment is not declared. Messrs. Bethel's and McLaren's views that the Technical Committee should remain in being and, following a further meeting in August, 1985 take a balanced view with any necessary recommendations, received the Panel's unanimous agreement.

P.C.N:

The Chairman introduced DAFS' Paper (No. 6) on revised administrative arrangements for the issue of sampling results, Scheduling Notices and licensing to grow ware on scheduled land. Mr. McIntosh explained these had been designed to be mutually beneficial to both DAFS and growers and in response to his request for the Panel's views, no objections or criticisms were voiced.

SEED
POTATO
STORAGE:

The Panel next considered DAFS' pre-circulated Paper No. 7 seeking increased discipline in seed potato storage to prevent the spread of PCN. Mr. Arbuckle supported the concept, while Mr. Hay felt there should be differentiation between the home and export trades. Mr. Bethel suggested a code of practice for exports, with "legislative" backing from DAFS, but the Chairman pointed out that the Regulations require freedom from PCN irrespective of destination and Mr. Mabbot explained that there are different interpretations of "nil tolerance" in different contexts. Mr. Cook agreed the matter needs to be thrashed out in smaller forums and stated that in the EEC view, exporters/

exporters should stick together until Morocco accepts that its demands are incapable of being met. In support, Mr. Hay's proposal to refer the matter to the re-formed sub-group (2 members each from DAFS, NFUS, and SPTA) for further consideration was accepted by the Panel.

On adjournment of the meeting for lunch, the Chairman vacated the Chair in favour of Mr. McIntosh. In respect of the Chairman's forthcoming retirement, Mr. Hay paid warm tribute to him and his record, and his proposed vote of thanks and appreciation received the unanimous support of all Panel representatives.

A.O.C.B:

(a) DAFS/Exporters Forum - Mr. McIntosh invited views on setting up such a forum at the end of the current Season. He felt such a forum could also discuss the implications of the outcome of the Court of Session case (when known). Mr. Bethel felt the main problem is to identify exporters but agreed this could be based on phytosanitary certificates recipients (including Northern Ireland).

(b) Colorado Beetles - Mrs. Turle reported that 53 live beetles were found on parsley imported from Adriatic Italy, before such imports (which now require phytosanitary certificates) were suspended for the rest of the parsley season. The most worrying aspect is that much of this material is used for display purposes in farm shops. The new parsley season starts in about two weeks time.

(c) Frost Warnings - Mr. Bethel suggested these might be extended to cover severe conditions en route to and in delivery areas. Mr. McIntosh asked if this would be confined to exports. Mr. Bethel cited recent experience to Portugal and offered to submit formalised thoughts to Mr. McIntosh in due course.

(d) 1-tonne bags - In reply to Mr. K. McKenzie, Mr. McIntosh stated the Regulations could allow re-use of sterilised bags but he would require to see the bags and sterilisation operation before deciding.

(e) Higher Voluntary Standards - In reply to Mr. McLaren, Mr. McIntosh pointed out that agreement had not been reached at the last Panel meeting. He suggested that if agreement now exists perhaps an approach through SSPDC to DAFS could be arranged. Mr. Cook pointed out that the Seed Trade Committee would be the ideal forum in which to pursue this matter and it was agreed to proceed by this route.

(f) Flax and "Roundup" - Mr. Hutchison enquired whether increased crops of flax would mean increased use of "Roundup". For NFUS, Mr. Hay stated he was not aware of any greater danger to seed potato crops, but suggested this point should be explored by the Technical Committee.

(g) Mr. John Hay - Referring to Mr. Hay's retiral as Convenor of the NFUS Potatoes Committee, Mr. McIntosh spoke in very warmest terms of Mr. Hay's outstanding record in all potatoes matters. His most appreciative remarks and good wishes were unanimously applauded by the whole Panel. Mr. Hay expressed his sincere appreciation to the Panel.

The meeting then closed with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.