

REPORT on a MEETING with the
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
FISHERIES FOR SCOTLAND held in
Chesser House, EDINBURGH at 2 p.m.
on Tuesday, 16th SEPTEMBER, 1986

PRESENT:

D.A.F.S. - Messrs. G.G. Lyall, I. McEwan and Dr. T.W. Hegarty
(Plants & Soil Unit, Scottish Advisory Unit)

N.F.U.S. - Mrs. Judith Armstrong (Assistant Secretary)

S.P.T.A. - Messrs. K.A. McKenzie and G.S. Brass, with D. Blackmore
in attendance

S.S.P.D.C. - Mr. John Bethel (Chief Executive)

Mr. Gordon Lyall took the Chair and welcomed those present. An apology for absence of Mr. J. McLaren (N.F.U.S.) was intimated.

INDUSTRY
FUNDING
OF R. & D:

In readiness for a meeting arranged by MAFF in London for 19th September, 1986 the Chairman sought a joint position of the Scottish Organisations present. He explained DAFS' understanding is

(a) there is no case for seeking more funding from the Scottish potato industry;

(b) better use should be made of existing resources;

(c) the PMB should be urged to divert some Sutton Bridge expenditure to other ends.

Early in the ensuing very prolonged discussion it was agreed that over-emphasis on seed production should be avoided. NFUS expressed regret that the preparatory Paper pre-circulated by MAFF took no account of the recommendations of the March meeting and was simply a "shopping list". NFUS re-stressed its view that there must be no switching of current expenditures to create opportunities for industry to contribute to thus vacated areas of work.

Dr. Hegarty stated the Government's declared intention to withdraw from the applied end of research is now accepted. Further efforts must therefore take place within the remit thus created. He described at length the extremely complex structure of existing committees and review bodies operating. Discussion included the view that the PMB must not be treated as the sole target for change. It was felt a new body joint with government and including the PMB will have to come into being over the longer term, which should be fed by ad hoc "sector" committees (themselves fed by submissions from separate interest within those sectors), to identify priorities and determine strategy.

It was agreed a full representation should attend the forthcoming MAFF meeting and NFUS and SSPDC would also speak for SPTA.

VISIT BY

MR. McLAUCHLAN: The Chairman explained that the earlier-postponed visit of Mr. Guy McLauchlan (MAFF's Ministerial Advisor) has now been re-arranged to take place in early October. He sought the meeting's views on a programme of events, visits, discussions evenings, etc. to an overall "theme".

The represented bodies' joint view was that the timing was unfortunately inconvenient and the overwhelming "theme" was particularly sensitive which precluded its adoption at this time. It was felt that a one month deferral would be less inconvenient and DAFS agreed to try this, although without much hope of success. In the event that deferral is not possible it was agreed DAFS would arrange a "low key" programme of visits and consultations without a "Road Show" and "theme" effort.

100% TUBER
INSPECTIONS:

Mr. Bethel reported that in a United Nations' publication dated June, 1986 showing world-wide seed potato tuber inspections standards, Scotland is the only country shown as inspecting "by sample", all other countries effecting 100% inspection. He pointed out this will fuel existing severe criticism of Scottish presentation quality as "cheap", "top-up", "last resort", for tuber (not disease) quality. It was well known, of course, that all exported Scottish seed potatoes are 100% tuber-inspected, but home-traded seed was having to compete at a disadvantage with other countries' 100% inspected supplies.

DAFS recognised the solution as being to inspect everything up to export standard, but feared the cost would be unacceptably high. The Chairman agreed the problem will be looked at again and stated that tigher tolerances (already under review) could be proposed at the next Consultative Panel Meeting.

Mr. Bethel sought quantification of the casual staff required to effect 100% inspections, with the cost thereof and suggested SSPDC would contribute to the cost of preparation and distribution of a booklet of information and guidance on dressing.

PLANT
HEALTH:

Referring to his letter of 8th November, 1985 regarding charges for statutory work, the Chairman explained it is intended to introduce these in Season 1987-88 as a "label charge". It is hoped that a Paper will be circularised within the next four weeks.

VEINAL
NECROSIS:

In reply to SPTA, Mr. McEwan stated that in respect of a tolerance for Veinal Necrosis disease in 'Elite'-class seed potatoes for Season 1987-88, the necessary legal instrument to effect this is already almost completed. He explained the targets are finalisation by the end of October, 1986 and completion of Parliamentary approval by the end of December, 1986.

In further reply he stated the amendments would include a three-year generation limitation of 'Elite'-class, commencing for all such stocks at that one time and he expressed the view that MAFF could not now resist these changes.

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