

REPORT on a MEETING of the
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL
in Chesser House, EDINBURGH at
9.45 a.m. on Thursday, 19th
FEBRUARY, 1987.

PRESENT:

D.A.F.S. - Administrative - Messrs. G. Lyall, I. McEwan,
Mrs. M. Barnes and Miss D. Pearson

- Inspectorate - Messrs. A. Robb and M. Archibald

- Scientific - Dr. P. Howell, Messrs. M. Cutler, T.D. Hall,
T. Mabbot, C. Quinn, M. Richardson and
Mrs. L. Turle

C.O.S.A.C. - Dr. R.W. Lang

N.F.U.S. - Messrs. J. Arbuckle and J.A. McLaren

P.M.B. - Mrs. B. Gordon

R.H.A.S. - Mr. W. Robertson

S.P.T.A. - Mr. G.S. Brass, with D. Blackmore in attendance

S.S.P.D.C. - Mr. J. Bethel

V.T.S.C.G.A. - Mr. D. Craib, with H.A.C. Davie in attendance.

Mr. Gordon Lyall took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were recorded on behalf of Mrs. J. Armstrong (NFUS), Mr. W.J. Aitken (SAOS) and Mr. K.A. McKenzie (SPTA).

MINUTES: The Panel considered the Minutes of its last meeting on 20th February, 1986 recently copied to those present.

MATTERS
ARISING:

1.5 - Virus V and Y - The Chairman confirmed that the requested explanatory leaflet had been duly issued by the Colleges.

2.9 - Voluntary downgrading - Mr. McEwan explained that following a review seeking improvements, none were deemed feasible and Paper 2 later in the Agenda sets out the arrangements. Mr. Lyall explained downgradings are almost entirely confined to exports and are relatively minor. In reply to Mr. Bethel, DAFS agreed to provide SSPDC with details of varieties and tonnages involved.

2.12 - "Banking" of PCN Tests - Mr. McEwan stated that although the Parliamentary Order to extend "banking" from 24 to 48 months is still in draft, it is to be laid shortly. Mr. McLaren welcomed this progress.

4.2 - Sealing of 1-tonne boxes - Mr. McEwan explained DAFS had circularised its unchanged requirements in May, 1986. With NFUS support, Mr. Davie stated there is strong resistance to hessian covers on cost grounds, especially for farmer-to-farmer loads. Following discussion it was agreed all representatives would reconsider this matter.

5 - Virus V - The Chairman referred to Paper 1 for today's meeting. Mr. Bethel urged immediate action as soon as identified - preferably one person should be in charge. DAFS agreed it is essential to be sharper off the mark.

6.3 - Planting of unclassified seed - Mr. Lyall stated this problem had been considered in the 1970's and a ban had been rejected as unenforceable. Looked at again now, it is still regarded as impossible to police and he sought the industry's views on whether a ban is really worthwhile on plant health grounds. During prolonged discussion it was reiterated that the problem exposes a weakness in the U.K. system which renders Scotland's High Grade Seed Area status extremely vulnerable. It was agreed that half measures will be ineffective. The Chairman/

Chairman stated DAFS will continue reviewing the matter but without commitment to resolve it.

8.2 - Soil testing of exports - The Chairman reported that in the light of a review of 1986 Season experience (when an overall soil tolerance of 0.5% had been retained but tighter for PCN-sensitive destinations), no change is indicated for Season 1987/88. In reply to Mr. McLaren, Mr. Mabbot provided results of "under grader" soil tests. Dr. Lang expressed concern at increased brushing, on which he is doing a survey. In reply to Mr. Bethel, Mr. McEwan stated that the "Bennett case" Appeal is to be heard on 15th May, 1987 and it was agreed to re-discuss this matter when the outcome is known, the Colleges continuing to advise meantime.

In conclusion, Mr. Bethel asked for Minutes to be circularised within eight weeks of each Panel meeting and Mr. McEwan agreed to try to meet this request.

1986 Season Inspections: In brief comments on the 1986 experience, Mr. Robb stated there had been a disproportionate drop in Elite crops within the decreased area inspected, with wide variation in readiness for inspections due to the adverse planting weather. Virus health was better overall and (bearing 1985 harvest conditions in mind) there had been less Blackleg than expected. PCN symptoms had been found in six crops (compared with only one crop in 1985). Mr. McLaren asked whether two-man inspections could be provided for larger growers and DAFS agreed to keep this in mind.

Mr. Hall spoke to the VTSC results, noting decreased entries and classifications, and decreased incidence of blackleg and aphid-borne diseases, but increased rogues. Four growers have been persuaded to discontinue VTSC operations. Mrs. Turle enlarged on aphid-borne diseases, stating that 1¼% of the inspected area was infected with Leaf Roll, indicating a further fall in the current year. She also gave results of "tracking back" analyses showing Aberdeenshire to have been a "net exporter" of Leaf Roll in 1985. Virus Y had dropped by 3% compared with 1985 and Veinal Necrosis was also reduced. Aphid survival is now "middling" - granules are not recommended for 1987 and it may be decided to recommend limitation of sprays, to avoid a build up of aphid resistance. She also explained the frequency of aphid peaks is increasing, believed to reflect better over-wintering on changing crops patterns.

Mr. Quinn commented on Blackleg results (63 rejections, same as 1985), further reduction being unlikely - 94% of Super Elite grade crops met the tolerance. He felt the time had come to tackle tuber-borne infection and fully supported Dr. Lang's concern on brushing. At his last meeting before retirement, Mr. Mabbot stated that with the new, speedier machine now operational, 7,500 PCN tests have been done and others are being dealt with as they arrive. He also explained in-store inspections had revealed PCN contamination, especially in boxes, against which high pressure hosing is helpful. Mr. McLaren proposed a sub-Committee be appointed to formulate advice to counter such contamination. DAFS agreed to consider this and report back, Dr. Lang adding that guidelines already exist.

Commenting on seed movement statistics, Mr. McEwan stated that exports to date, at just over 60,000 tonnes, are a little better than at the same time last year. Mr. Davie added that despatches to England and Wales were 7% up at the end of December, with a late January/early February surge expected, Mr. Bethel adding that labels drawn are much heavier than the same time last year. In reply to Mr. Bethel, Mr. Robb confirmed that although tuber inspections were down from 45% to 38%, increased rejections showed that quality control leaves much to be desired. There was a short discussion of 100% tuber inspections and DAFS offered to look at possible reductions in tuber tolerances and report back on this and Mr. Arbuckle's suggestion to identify specific crops on labels.

Returning/

Returning to his point about drawdown of labels, Mr. Bethel explained that a comparison with actual despatch figures revealed that a discrepancy of 78,000 tonnes in 1985 increased to 90,000 tonnes in 1986. In a prolonged and unproductive discussion, Mr. Davie felt that while some of this discrepancy could represent direct farmer-to-farmer movement, it would also include seed retained to plant the Scottish ware crop, labels discarded for rejections, re-dating, etc. His enquiries so far only accentuate the complexity of trying to reconcile the two lots of figures, but there has been a remarkable consistency of difference over a good many years. DAFS agreed to note the problem, which Mr. Bethel would follow up in writing to them shortly.

REGULATIONS
AMENDMENTS:

Mr. McEwan reported that the proposed changed tolerance for Veinal Necrosis will become effective for Season 1987/88, but that Generation Control for Elite Grade (which will permit 3 generations, not 2) will not become effective until Season 1988/89.

INSPECTIONS &
LABELLING
FEES:

Speaking to the Paper detailing DAFS' Fees for Growing Crops Inspections, Mr. McEwan explained that after remaining unchanged for three years, these will be increased by £1.50 for each half hectare for all classes for season 1986. This takes account of rising costs and falling acreage and is half what it should have been. Indications are that there will need to be a further (but smaller) increase again next year. There is to be no increase in Fees for the Labelling Scheme but it is likely that a charge will be made for labels for exports at the same rate as for the home market.

Supported by Mr. Bethel, Mr. McLaren felt that a refund should be paid for all export labels returned neatly. Mrs. Gordon referred to the rejection rate for recent exports to Algeria (60% for the second boat from Fraserburgh and 38% for the second boat from Montrose). She suggested a delegation from DAFS Inspectorate should visit Algeria to try to agree the standards wanted. Both Mr. Bethel and Mr. McLaren supported this suggestion, extending it to a joint DAFS/Commercial delegation to try to repair the damage experienced in both 1986 and 1987 Seasons. DAFS undertook to consider this suggestion.

STANDARD
OF
ROGUING:

It was reported that during a November, 1986 meeting of Inspections staffs several comments had been made that standards of roguing have been deteriorating during the past several years. There had been many examples of rogues having missed VN, Leaf Roll and rogue plants. Mr. Arbuckle pointed out that increased failures at inspections clearly reflected this.

A.O.C.B.:

(a) Fligem Plant Genetics - In reply to Mr. Craib, Mr. Lyall stated that this Organisation is active in micro tubers, genetic engineering and micro-propagation. In the light of its approach to DAFS and to preserve commercial confidentiality, he declined further comment.

(b) 1986 Crop Register - Mr. McLaren congratulated the Department on its earlier issue of the official Crop Register in 1986.

On behalf of the external representatives present Mr. Brass thanked the Department staff for a worthwhile meeting and for its hospitality. He extended best wishes to Mr. Tom Mabbot on his retirement. He concluded his remarks by proposing a Vote of Thanks to the Chair. The meeting then formally concluded.