

REPORT on a MEETING of the SEED
POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL in
Craigs House, East Craigs,
EDINBURGH at 9.45 a.m. on
Tuesday, 21st FEBRUARY, 1989.

- PRESENT:
- D.A.F.S. - Administrative - Messrs. I. Whitelaw, I.F. McEwan, W. Adamson, Mrs. M. Barnes and Mrs. I. Messer.
 - Inspectorate - Messrs. A. Robb and M. Archibald
 - Scientific - Drs. P. Howell and I. Clayton, Messrs. T.D. Hall, C. Quinn and M. Richardson.
 - C.O.S.A.C. - Dr. S. Bowen (vice Dr. Lang)
 - N.F.U.S. - Messrs. J. Arbuckle and J. Duncan, with Mrs. J. Armstrong in attendance.
 - R.H.A.S. - Mr. J. Aitchison
 - S.A.O.S. - Absent
 - S.P.T.A. - Messrs. G.S. Brass and J.R. McArthur, with D. Blackmore in attendance
 - S.S.P.D.C. - Mr. J. Bethel
 - V.T.S.C.G.A. - Mr. J. Cruickshank

Mr. Ian Whitelaw took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting, thanking East Craigs for use of its facilities.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were recorded on behalf of Dr. R.W. Lang (C.O.S.A.C.), Mrs. B. Gordon (P.M.B.) and H.A.C. Davie (V.T.S.C.G.A.).

MINUTES: The Minutes of the Panel's previous meeting, in Edinburgh on 3rd March, 1988 copied by D.A.F.S. to each member of the Panel, were taken as read.

MATTERS ARISING: 2.2 - S.A.C. Brushing Investigations - The guidance notes referred to had been issued in June, 1988.

2.3.1 - Bulking of certain crops Arrangements had now been made. Mr. Bethel congratulated D.A.F.S. on earlier Crop Register publication.

2.3.2 - New Producer Numbers

2.4 - P.C.N. Working Group - This matter had been placed on the Agenda for today's meeting in readiness for the March Letter.

3.3.2 - Blackleg Test - The Chairman referred to D.A.F.S.' letter of 24th November, 1988 and Dr. Bowen stated the Colleges' leaflet is now available.

4.2 - Labelling Inspections - Mr. Robb reported briefly on two points on which he would enlarge later today.

7. - Sealing of one-tonne boxes - Following further consideration D.A.F.S. had issued instructions last year.

9. - Review of Crops, Plant Health and Pesticide Work by D.A.F.S. - The Chairman reported that imminent receipt of Mr. Stewart's Report on his Review is awaited.

9.3 - Inclusion of disease results in Certificates - In reply to Mr. McArthur, Mr. McEwan expressed the hope that Mr. Stewart's Report would lead to progress on this suggestion.

VIRUS V:

Mrs. Barnes reported that in 1988 two crops had been found to be infected with Virus V, to which existing safeguards will be applied. Commenting that Estima appears to be the most susceptible variety she stated that monitoring would continue into the 1989 Crop. Dr. Howell added that Virus V is vectored by leaf roll aphids on potatoes in stores and being light-sensitive, was less likely on surface tubers.

P.C.N.
WORKING
GROUP:

The Panel considered D.A.F.S.' tabled Paper, introduced by the Chairman and enlarged upon by Mr. McEwan. Although little progress had been possible since mid-1988, there is clear urgency to deal with part fields problems and it was intended to extend the use of "discretion" in this respect.

Discussion covered re-inspection of large fields before banning, countered by size of field being less important than its history, the undesirability of rigid criteria at this stage and the relatively small proportion of total plantings affected. Chemical controls were regarded as unwise and extended rotations (12 years to be effective) as largely impractical, while groundkeepers and winter cereals would undermine any benefit of rotational changes.

In summary, the Chairman was heartened by the Panel's awareness. He accepted that representatives needed to consult their own organisations and asked for comments as soon as possible. D.A.F.S. would meantime re-consider para. 5 of its Paper in the light of today's discussion.

HIGH GRADE
SEED AREA:

Mr. McEwan provided an oral update on E.E.C. negotiations regarding continuation of H.G.S.A. arrangements. Current indications are that 'Elite' level would be the minimum seed requirement, with ware requirements still to be determined. The next E.E.C. Committee meeting in April would be reported to the Commission for further general discussion, probably in the Autumn. In the Chairman's view this indicated some measured progress and if required, the Panel could be re-convened on an ad hoc basis.

During discussion, and in reply to Mr. Brass, Mr. McEwan did not feel that retention of the H.G.S.A. was receding, but rather it was "still all to fight for". He also confirmed D.A.F.S. would continue to accept application for voluntary downgrading of protected varieties. In reply to Mr. Hall, Mr. Brass confirmed the trade's continuing opposition to a nil tolerance for Veinal Necrosis and in reply to Mr. McArthur, Mr. McEwan explained D.A.F.S.' position on plans for classification of English crops at Basic Seed levels. The Chairman proposed this last matter be retained on future Agendas.

1988 CROPS
INSPECTIONS:

Introducing discussion of D.A.F.S.' pre-circulated statistical Report on results of the 1988 Growing Crops Inspection, Mr. Robb referred first to staffing levels and climatic problems and highlighted the 98% pass-rate at SE1 level and the highest-ever pass-rate achieved overall. He continued with comparisons and comments on individual diseases and the Chairman recorded formal thanks to the industry and trade for its co-operation in the Scheme.

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In subsequent discussion and in reply to Mr. Brass, Mr. McEwan provided detailed background explanation of activities relating to the variety Russet Burbank and Mr. Bethel drew attention to the potential loss to U.K. acreage by overseas production of this variety for U.K. use. Mr. Bethel also highlighted the reduced incidence of Blackleg, possibly reflecting increased tuber treatments but which Mr. Quinn attributed entirely to the weather pattern. In fuller discussion and explanation a possible survey prior to consideration of introducing a bacterial loading test into the Inspection Scheme was mentioned.

Following the Chairman's summary to proceed with co-operation from the industry and to report back again next year, Mr. Richardson spoke strongly in warning of staffing level impediments to proper execution of supportive scientific work resulting from increasing financial restrictions.

INSPECTIONS
PROCEDURES:

Introducing D.A.F.S.' pre-circulated Paper reviewing the intensity of Inspections, the Chairman explained that as with the Paper on the P.C.N. Working Group, discussions today would be followed by further comment after consideration by constituent organisations.

Mr. McEwan enlarged on the explanatory introduction to the Paper and Mr. Robb took the Panel through each point in turn. In first responses, N.F.U.S. and S.P.T.A. expressed reservations on halving the intensity of the number of plants examined and Mr. Bethel (S.S.P.D.C.), while welcoming preparation of the Paper, felt obliged to heed the comments of his "practical" colleagues. Mr. McArthur's suggestion that perhaps changed methodology could be applied at second inspections only led to a lively discussion, to which Mr. Robb replied to each point raised in turn.

In conclusion the Chairman repeated his request for further comments as soon as possible to facilitate D.A.F.S.' further consideration and preparation/despatch of the March letter to growers.

1989 FEES:

The Chairman explained that although the Inspections and Labelling Fees for 1989 had still be be finalised, present indications were that increases over 1988 were unlikely. In reply to his request for views on likely plantings in 1989, S.P.T.A. representatives anticipated a reduction of 600 to 700 hectares. While N.F.U. representatives did not expect any increase, the ratio of seed to ware plantings could not be foreseen.

During subsequent discussion Mr. McArthur referred back to labels issued in D.A.F.S.' statistical Report on 1988 Inspections and Mr. Brass gave credit for reduced levels of complaint from the south this year resulting from this changed targetting criteria for tuber inspections. Mr. Arbuckle drew attention to the cost of returning loads rejected for export (especially of Desiree) to the grower's farm. Mr. Bethel also reported that the difference between P.M.B. and English tonnage figures and the tonnages from D.A.F.S.' labels issued is now only 0.1%. Mr. Cruickshank also raised the matter of labels for exports to Egypt.

VALIDITY
OF LABELS:

Mrs. Barnes explained D.A.F.S.' view that improved labels-issuing capability nowadays no longer justified the issue of labels to large users which are valid for eight weeks. Brief discussion covered bad weather problems and returned labels. The Panel agreed to 28 day label validity for all users, with close monitoring of complaints.

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CROP
AREAS:

In response to D.A.F.S.' proposal to survey for comparison of areas entered for inspection against areas of crops planted, the Panel agreed unanimously that accurate statistics are essential. Mr. McArthur also proposed that the minimum "unit" for inspection be reduced from 0.5 ha. to 0.1 ha. In summary, the Chairman stated the survey will proceed and its results will be reported to the Panel's next meeting.

A.O.C.B.:

Chemicals - Mr. Cruickshank referred to the chemical 2 - amino butane. The Chairman explained that would be duly considered before recommendations are submitted to Ministers and he undertook to report back as soon as possible.

Seed Support Scheme - Mr. Brass thanked D.A.F.S. for its recent Paper in connection with the Seed Support Scheme.

The Chairman expressed thanks to those present for a very workmanlike meeting and on behalf of the Panel conveyed appreciation of the excellent catering provided by East Craigs, which Mr. Richardson undertook to pass on to the appropriate quarters. In turn, Mr. Arbuckle proposed a Vote of Thanks to the Chair with unanimous support.