

REPORT on a MEETING of the SCOTTISH
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL at
East Craigs, EDINBURGH at 9.45 a.m.
on Monday, 25th FEBRUARY, 1991

- PRESENT:
- DAFS - Administrative - Messrs. I.M. Whitelaw, G. Brown
and W. Adamson, with Mesdames
M. Barnes and I. Messer.
- Inspectorate - Messrs. A. Robb and A. Bone.
- Scientific - Drs. S. Carnegie, I. Clayden,
R. Hay and P. Howell, with
Messrs. D. Hall and C. Quinn.
- COSAC - Dr. R. Lang
- NFUS - Messrs. J. Arbuckle and W. Reid with Ms. C. Lang
in attendance.
- PMB - Mr. J.S. Cruickshank (Vice Mr. John Hay)
- RHAS - Mr. J. Aitchison
- SPTA - Mr. J.R. McArthur, with D. Blackmore in
attendance.
- SSPDC - Mr. J. Bethell
- VTSCGA - Mr. J. McKenzie, with H. Edmond in attendance.

Mr. I.M. Whitelaw took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting, introducing those attending the Panel for the first time.

- MINUTES:
- DAFS' pre-copied Minutes of the Panel's meeting in Edinburgh on 12th March, 1990 and amendment thereof dated 29th June, 1990 were taken as read. Both were approved and adopted.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(1) The Chairman reported that no further meetings on High Grade Regions had taken place. He understood the E.C. Commission is preparing for such regions in Member Countries. Mr. Hall explained several points including Elite (or equivalent) as a standard Common Grade, and AA grade from entered crops being marketable for ware cropping only, throughout HGSA's. In reply to the Chair, Mr. Hall stated no further meetings had been fixed although V.N. and one other point were still outstanding. The Chairman suggested that DAFS issue a further Paper in due course and the Panel agreed.

(2) Mr. Robb reported further on MAFF's trial production of basic seed in East Anglia. In the second year of a three year programme at one of three sites, progeny from 1989-planted SE had flopped in 1990. A second site 1990 crop had produced admixture and some Virus Y, the progeny due to be planted in 1991. In reply to Mr. Arbuckle, Mr. Robb stated that trials reported in Kent concerned aphicides for a single year only. In Mr. Bethell's view perceived variable size and non-constant planting placed the East Anglian trials in a non-critical perspective.

(3)/

(3) Mr. Quinn gave an updating report on DAFS' two-year study on bacterial loadings in tubers. Despite use of SCRI and (less sensitive) Dutch tests, there had been very poor correlation with "in-field" findings and the study was therefore inconclusive. On this basis the conclusion was that a statutory "in Scheme" testing requirement could not be supported. In reply to the Chair he felt the results of the study will be issued about one year hence. Dr. Lang felt that tests can identify bad stocks but storage variations possibly affect correlations. Mr. Bethell argued that tests should not determine classification but rather indicate appropriate stock management measures. In reply, Dr. Lang regarded commercial uptake of testing facilities as "fair" and Mr. Quinn agreed an advisory role would be best. The Panel agreed with the Chairman's summary that even with independent support, he would not want to introduce a testing requirement into the Scheme, particularly at the present time, preferring consideration of advisory means.

(4) Mr. Adamson reported on PCN Soil Sampling, stating that some improvement had been achieved but pressure to this end will be maintained. In reply to Mr. McArthur he reported that compared with 306 test results outstanding at this date last year, only 200 were outstanding now. Mr. Arbuckle enquired regarding timeous test applications, which he believed were usually about one half of the total. Mr. Adamson stated that these had improved by 46% out of 9% fewer applications. In summary, the Chairman regarded use of a "strong arm" as inappropriate and proposed present arrangements continue for a further review next year.

INSPECTIONS
REPORT:

Mr. Robb introduced and enlarged in general terms on the pre-circulated Report on the 1990 Growing Crops Inspections. In the light of 1990 experience, Mr. Bethell called for more care in future on timing the issue of classification results. The Chairman undertook to pursue this, but to maintain the usual June-September sequence. Mrs. Barnes also explained that with 200 crops un-entered in the computer, the 1990 interim figures issued had been wrong, but this was corrected before subsequent figures were issued.

Mr. Hall enlarged and commented on the VTSC results which disclosed big reductions in the percentage of clear inspections. He stated roguing had been very poor, downgrading had been for blackleg, not virus, although burning down had been within time. He also stated that one million minitubers had been planted in 1990 with patchy results, 1989 having not done well either. The Panel discussed possible reasons for this without conclusion. Mr. Hall also stated that compared with 48,000 tubers from Ingreton in 1989, the 1990 figure was 58,000 tubers. In summary, the Chairman stated DAFS would continue its watching brief.

Dr. Clayden commented on PCN results. In reply to Mr. McArthur she reported 10 samples tested positive for Pallida and Mr. McKenzie, in pointing out that in-crop sampling found only one case of eelworm (compared with three the previous year), felt this provided evidence of over-ambitious over-sampling. After brief discussion, the Chairman voiced against tampering with current requirements. Mr. Quinn also commented on the blackleg results and in the general discussion that ensued Mr. Arbuckle enquired regarding assessment of single man inspections./

inspections. In reply Mr. Robb pointed out that with single inspectors being more experienced, results are more reliable and he wanted to retain such inspections. Mr. Reid's request to restore plant population information to inspection application forms was well supported. In reply Mr. Robb stated the basic population had been increased to 60,000 plants per hectare but this may require to be further reviewed. In summary the Chairman undertook that DAFS will try to accommodate any specific complaints in 1991.

100% TUBER
INSPECTIONS:

DAFS pre-circulated Paper having been taken as read, the Chairman explained the intention to have meetings with interested parties in May, 1991 to iron out practicalities but not to amend the scheme. He thanked the industry for its positive approach. Mr. Robb pointed out that the Paper was now less "heavy, extreme" and included amended pallet breakdown arrangements and now provided for two-stage inspections if necessary. He was much encouraged by the smooth running experienced to date. In brief discussion Mr. McArthur sought clarification over small deliveries and Mr. Arbuckle referred to a 20 tonnes inspection despatched in 4 x 5 tonnes consignments.

SINGLE
ALL-CLASSES
LABELS:

Speaking in amplification of DAFS' pre-circulated Paper, Mrs. Barnes explained that current labels are of eleven different kinds and costs considerations have prompted a radical simplification of this system by adoption of a single label for VTSC, SE and E classes. It would be helpful if the industry expressed its views and any colour preference before the proposed May 1991 meeting.

VOLUNTARY
PREMIUM
SCHEME:

In respect of DAFS' pre-circulated Paper on this matter, the Chairman explained that it made no mention of conceivable difficulties in connection with publication of the Crops Register. Mr. Reid also asked who is to be responsible for publicising this scheme. The Chairman proposed that the May 1991 meeting should concentrate on these matters.

VOLUNTARY
DOWN-
GRADING:

In a further pre-circulated Paper, DAFS proposed to simplify the procedure for voluntary down-grading of identified tonnages of seed potatoes before marketing by transferring authority from Pentland House to local labels issuing offices with effect from the 1991-92 marketing season. The Panel endorsed this proposal unanimously.

USE OF
GRANULES:

Referring to the Colleges' recent (green) Paper on the use of granules against virus diseases, Dr. Clayden emphasised that (1) granules are not effective against non-persistent viruses and (2) the timing of recommendations can be overtaken by changes in circumstances. Dr. Howell firmly endorsed these statements in support of the new (combined repellent/systemic) "dual spray" approach. He also reminded the Panel that the leaf roll reservoir in the 1990 crop will be planted in Spring 1991 and urged much-increased attention to roguing of the resultant growing crop. In these same matters the Chairman praised the co-ordination between the Colleges and SSPDC.

Mr./

VISIT TO
ALGERIA:

Mr. Robb provided background information to DAFS' pre-circularised confidential Report on the visit he and Dr. Carnegie had made to Algeria from 17th to 19th November, 1990 in response to a reported Algerian ban on the importation of seed potatoes from Scotland. Although repeated assurances were received from the Algerians that no such ban existed, it was carefully explained that whereas the Algerian Plant Health Authority could formerly permit some derogation from their nil tolerance for Phoma, that same tolerance is now part of Algerian Law from which no derogation is possible. Subsequent discussions had indicated that representation to secure amendment of this law, supported by a comprehensive and carefully prepared "file" with EC backing, might be sympathetically considered, especially if contracts for significant tonnages to high specifications for the Algerian market were also offered.

Mr. Robb favoured preparation of such a "file" if trade support were to be available. Mr. Bethell pointed out that DAFS must play "a very straight bat" (the Algerians will ensure a non-level pitch) and be punctilious in carrying out any undertakings. Mr. Cruickshank welcomed the Report, but the Panel's discussions were not conclusive.

A.O.C.B.:

(1) VTSC burning down - Mr. McKenzie reported that a proposal to reduce the period required for burning down of VTSC crops from 3 weeks to 2 weeks after final inspection had been circularised to all members of the VTSCGA. Only 3 members (all growers of Record on contract) favoured the proposal. All other Members rejected it, for climatic, multi-varieties, etc. reasons. Mr. Quinn pointed out that burning down is not the sole consideration, harvest date being equally important.

(2) Change of use of 2AB - Mr. Robb reported that 1990 crop lab. tests are now proceeding and results are expected by the end of March. A further trial is to take place in 1991. Mr. Arbuckle asked what notice would be given if a ban is imposed. The Chairman stated that a maximum reasonable period would be sought to allow search for a suitable alternative.

(3) Inspections and Labelling Fees - The Chairman announced that Inspection Fees are to remain unchanged for 1991 but Labelling Fees may require to be increased. This latter point will be finalised at the May, 1991 meeting.

(4) Burning down periods - It was pointed out that the burning down period is to be two weeks under the Voluntary Premium Scheme, whereas the period for Earlies crops under the Statutory Scheme is three weeks. Against a suggestion that these periods be co-ordinated, Mr. McArthur felt the three weeks period should be allowed to lapse.

(5) DAFS' Title change - In reply to Mr. Bethell, the Chairman confirmed that DAFS' Official Title had been changed to Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department (SOAFD) but that it will continue to be known as "the Department".

Mr. Arbuckle proposed that the Panel's best wishes be conveyed to Mr. Ian McEwan. He also proposed a Vote of Thanks to the Chair and to East Craigs for its hospitality. These proposals were supported unanimously, whereupon the meeting was closed.