

REPORT on a MEETING of the
SEED POTATO CONSULTATIVE PANEL
at East Craigs, EDINBURGH at
9.45 a.m. on Monday, 2nd
MARCH, 1992.

- PRESENT:
- SOAFD - Administrative - Messrs. G. Brown, W. Adamson and Miss C. McCracken, with Mesdames M. Barnes and I. Messer.
 - Inspectorate - Messrs. A. Robb and A. Bone
 - Scientific - Drs. R. Hay, J. Chart and J. Pickup, Mr. T.D. Hall and Miss I. Browning.
 - COSAC - Dr. R. Lang
 - NFUS - Messrs. J. Arbuckle and J. Black (with Ms. C. Lang in attendance)
 - PMB - Mr. John Hay
 - RHAS - Mr. J. Aitchison
 - SPTA - Messrs. R. Doig and D. Smith (with D. Blackmore in attendance)
 - SSPDC - Mr. N. Arbuckle (vice J. Bethell)
 - VTSCGA - Mr. J. McKenzie (with H. Edmond in attendance)

Mr. Gordon Brown took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting, introducing those attending for the first time. He also intimated an Apology for absence on behalf of Mr. I.M. Whitelaw (SOAFD).

MINUTES: SOAFD's pre-copied Minutes of the Panel's meeting in Edinburgh on 25th February, 1991 were taken as read and duly approved.

MATTERS ARISING: The Chairman explained that pressures of events had prevented a further Panel meeting envisaged for May, 1991 from taking place. Updating Reports were provided as follows:-

1. High Grade Regions - Mr. Hall explained a further meeting with the E.C. had taken place in Brussels during the previous week. Discussion had centred on Health Regions and a further meeting is to be arranged. The Chairman added that Plant Health matters are increasingly impacting on marketing, in completion of the Single Market this year and that labels will become "plant passports" in that single market.

2. Trial production of Basic Seed in East Anglia - Mr. Robb reported that one firm had continued trialling in 1991 and its crops had failed to achieve the necessary standard, indicating the demise of this initiative in this area. Some AA had been achieved in Derbyshire, indicating some potential there.

3. Voluntary Premium Scheme - Mrs. Barnes reported that 668 applications had been made of which 147 crops had met the standards. In many cases slow bulking had prevented burning down. Up to the end of January, 1992 148 tonnes had been labelled. It is intended to continue the Scheme for one more year.

Mr./

Mr. J. Arbuckle pointed out that that burn down had been too late to allow annotation of VPS crops in the Register. He urged more publicity for the Scheme in 1992 and Mr. Hall explained he is to prepare an article for the PMB to this end. Mr. McKenzie had found no demand for this product, the initiative for which had been politically inspired by the English NFU.

1991 GROWING
CROP
INSPECTIONS
REPORT:

The Panel considered SOAFD's pre-circulated statistical Report on the results of the 1991 Inspections, supplemented by verbal comments by Messrs. Robb and Hall. The latter explained that SOAFD had distributed 66,000 clones last year of which 49 (of 18 varieties) were subsequently found to have been virus infected. He also stated that three million mini-tubers had been planted in 1991 but, for commercial reasons, the results have not been released. Mr. Robb provided information on the extra monitoring of Piper crops in 1991. Of a total of 667 such crops, 104 were withdrawn or rejected. The remaining 568 crops held their grade and no evidence of virus disease was seen in 406 of them. About 20,000 "Elisa" tests of leaf samples had been carried out by the scientific services, compared with the usual 1,000 tests a year in the past. Mr. J. Arbuckle expressed the Panel's sincere congratulations and appreciation to SOAFD staff for their enormous efforts in these respects and at no extra cost to the industry.

WARE
SURVEY:

Mrs. Barnes reported that (out of an approximate total of 900-1,000) 112 ware growers of 267 ware crops had been visited in 1991 in connection with enforcement of the prohibition on planting unclassified seed in the protected region. 224 of those crops had acceptable documentation and no further action could be taken. The remaining 43 crops were inspected, 5 of which were found to be badly infected and were ordered to be burned down within 7 days. One grower did not comply and SOAFD instructed a contractor to do the work and recovered the cost thereof from that grower.

PCN - SOIL
SAMPLING:

Mr. Adamson reported there had been virtually no reduction in late applications for soil tests. Out of 1,760 applications in 1990, 652 (37%) had been late and in 1991, 629 (35%) out of 1,796 had been late. Dr. Pickup explained there is capacity for 350 tests per week and Dr. Hay pointed out that in the face of Treasury pressures to meet performance targets, non-timeous receipt of samples makes it impossible to achieve those targets. The Panel's discussion to try to solve this problem was not successful and Dr. Hay proposed expert advice be sought from information technologists. The Chairman also stated that in connection with the E.C. and Plant Health matters, elderly PCN legislation in the U.K. is being reviewed.

100% TUBER
INSPECTIONS:

Mr. Robb reported that 20 extra temporary staff had been engaged to meet the additional work involved in implementing inspection of all consignments. Differing interpretations of criteria north and south of the Border are still causing problems, which are being tackled energetically. In respect of the completion of the single market and the prospect of no need for phytosanitary certificates therein, discussion turned to export standards. SOAFD sought industry views in due course on non-differentiation of virus diseases and other faults within single composite tolerances and how these could/

could affect some countries' nil tolerance requirements for certain specific defects. Mr. J. Arbuckle felt that higher standards should not be introduced when the Voluntary Premium Scheme indicates that customers are unwilling to pay for them.

SPCS 1992:

The Chairman emphasised SOAFD's gratitude for the industry's response to the earlier Consultation Paper on the Seed Potato Classification Scheme changes for 1992. As a result of those responses, SOAFD had prepared a further Paper which was then tabled for the Panel's consideration.

In a brief summary of the introductory comments, the Chairman explained that in the light of the complexity of formulating a definition for legislative purposes, the proposed automatic downgrading of crops had been deleted. That most of the earlier proposals have survived as Annex 1, he felt, reflected great credit on the authors thereof (Messrs. Hall and Robb). New recommendations culled from the consultative process have been listed in Annex 2. Mr. Doig drew attention to Para. 5 of the introduction and asked how much more than a 10% increase in fees is likely to be in train. The Chairman was unable to be more precise until costs have been accurately determined. Dr. Hay reminded the Panel that recovery of full economic costs is legally required.

Turning to Annex 1, the Chairman pointed out that Para. 1 is retained from the Consultative Paper, as agreed. Similarly, Para. 2 is unchanged, it being the intention that the two formal inspections will not be more than two weeks apart. Mr. McKenzie welcomed the advancement of formal inspections as a tremendous improvement. Mr. Robb envisaged formal inspections beginning on 29th June, 1992 and being completed by the end of the third week in July.

In Para. 3 - Level 1 and Para. 1 of Annex 2, Dr. Hay explained he envisaged a minimum period of 3 years before aphid forecasting would be reliable and the Chairman explained that the "tracks" quoted are not sacrosanct. In respect of Level 2, Mr. J. Arbuckle sought scientific assurance that spraying stops aphid build-up and in respect of post-harvest testing which Para. 6 of Annex 2 states will be levied against individuals (which will first require legislative change), it was estimated this will cost approximately £100 per crop. In Level 3, it was stated that a definition of "zone" was still "fluid" (possibly a "zone" will define itself) and it was felt a "zone" should contain a specified minimum number of crops.

Para. 4 revived discussion of nil tolerance for Veinal Necrosis and phytosanitary certificates and it was decided to let E.C. instances lapse, but to write in respect of others. Para. 5 is retained unchanged from the Consultative Paper. Para. 6 and Para. 2 of Annex 2 (re ware crops) is legislatively problematic. Since it is outwith the Seed Regulations, it must be dealt with under Plant Health and/or prohibition of planting legislation and, therefore, must involve other government departments. "Other measures" are mostly retentions from the Consultative Paper, with the inclusion of "possible deletion of VTSC" derived from responses thereto. These are not intended for introduction before Season 1993 at the earliest.

Annex 2, Paras. 3, 4 and 5 go together and will increase the Inspectorate's work-load. It was agreed SAC will include advice on dumps in their blight announcements. Para. 8 also links with Para 1. In respect of Para. 7 (review of the changes), SOAFD sought the Industry's views as to whether this should be through additional Consultative Panel meetings or otherwise. The Chairman asked for replies, with any further responses to today's tabled Paper and Annexes, to be in SOAFD's hands before Friday, 13th March, 1992.

A.O.C.B.: 1. The Chairman briefly outlined organisational changes being planned within SOAFD to improve its "customer responsiveness" by inter-unit over-lapping.

2. Form Changes - Mrs. Barnes explained these are intended to encourage the earliest possible submission of Crop Inspection applications and to reduce the need for the ten-day extension for merchants.

The meeting then concluded and Mr. J. Arbuckle proposed a Vote of Thanks to the Chair, which the Panel supported unanimously.