

REPORT on a MEETING arranged by the  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SEED POTATO  
MERCHANTS in 8 Manor Place,  
EDINBURGH at 2 p.m. on Wednesday,  
28th OCTOBER, 1992.

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- PRESENT:
- N.A.S.P.M. - Messrs. D. Scott, (Chairman), C. Baker, P. Smith and W. Scott, with A.B.S. Paine (Secretary) in attendance.
  - N.F.U. - Mr. D. Piccaver
  - N.F.U.S. - Messrs. J. Black and A. Strachan with Ms. C. Lang in attendance.
  - S.P.T.A. - Messrs. G.S. Brass, R. Doig, D.H. Lindsay and D.Y. Stewart, Jnr., with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.
  - N.I.P.M.A. - Mr. W. Scott (as above) as observor.
  - I.P.M.Ltd. - Messrs. P. O'Connor and G. O'Driscoll as observors.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting. He explained NASPM has been considering the matter of complaints periods for a number of months and now seeks an informal exchange of views. NASPM had written to MAFF on the subject and copies of MAFF's reply were tabled.

SKIN SPOT,  
GANGRENE &  
DRY ROT:

In reply to the Chair, NFUS and SPTA confirmed an extension of the complaints period allowed for skin spot, gangrene and dry rot by their jointly-approved Conditions of Purchase from ten days to fourteen days has already been agreed.

OTHER DEFECTS: The Chairman invited comments regarding introduction of the same period for complaints for any other defects defined in the Seed Potato Regulations 1991 (pink Paper tabled).

Mr. Piccaver felt this period is insufficient for latent diseases, in which respect there was still a long way to go. MAFF prefers a non-legal route (e.g. Arbitration) to resolve any problems.

Mr. Strachan pointed out that latent risks encourages the earliest possible inspection after arrival. If any concern, notify immediately. Mr. Smith wondered if the inspection system is ineffective but Mr. Piccaver felt the problem to be human error. Mr. Strachan also pointed out that Virus and PCN are not synonymous. Mr. Brass urged that if, as experience has shown, the three day period is not impracticable it should be maintained as the best possible incentive to immediate inspection on arrival. Mr. Blackmore reminded the meeting of Mr. Hunter's view, supported by SOAFD, that periods for commercial contracts are not related to periods for Seed Inspections purposes. Mr. Baker pointed out that the Conditions complaints periods have not been revised for 22 years and should be updated to take account of intervening legislation as soon as possible. In reply to a question, the meeting agreed that about 1% of consignments to England became subject to complaint, in/

in response to which Mr. Black questioned what the fuss was about. (It was patently clear that the NASPM's representatives were all totally convinced that the Seed Potato Regulations provide a statutory requirement for a fourteen day complaints period for all defects to be allowed in Conditions, otherwise they are illegal.)

The Chairman explained the matter should also be considered as a move to improve customer relations and Mr. Piccaver expressed concern that despite a continuing fall in its share of the English market, the Scottish seed industry remained unwilling to change. Mr. Strachan pointed out that very considerable improvements have taken and are continuing to take place, including 100% tuber inspections this year. He felt the industry is more confident of its product now, but the earliest possible response after delivery was still very important, as was a clear cut point in time when responsibility passes.

Mr. Doig reminded the meeting that the discussions were intended to be taken back to the respective parent bodies. The Chairman agreed and felt that the rest of today's Agenda had been automatically covered. He stressed that NASPM was pressing to modernise the Conditions of Sale and recognised it may have to do so alone.

In a concluding observation Mr. O'Connor explained that Eire has had official tuber inspections since 1931 reliance on which is generally agreed to have led to total disaster. Quoting his father's view, he felt "the ultimate responsibility rests with the guy who puts the tubers in the bag".

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