

REPORT on the THIRD MEETING of THE  
JOINT POTATO TRADE COUNCIL held in  
the RURAL CENTRE, INGLISTON,  
EDINBURGH at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 8  
December 1999.

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PRESENT: S.P.T.A.:- Messrs. D. J. Harley, V. Lumb, J. R. McArthur and H. B. Edmond, the Secretary  
N.A.S.P.M.:- Messrs. R. Reiss, R. Baker, and I. Stirling.

In accordance with the agreement it was SPTA's place in rotation to chair the meeting. D. Harley in the absence of the President of SPTA welcomed all present. He gave a particular warm welcome to C. Greenslade, B. Cockwell, G. Kerr and M. Barnes, personnel from SERAD and SASA who were present for item 4 on the agenda.

- (1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies were received from A. M. Beattie.
- (2) PREVIOUS MEETING: It was agreed that the meeting would take item 4 first and use the report on the previous meeting as a basis for points to be put the officials present.
  - (a) Seed Potato Classification Schemes: C. Greenslade was asked to update the meeting on the progress with the updating of the Seed Potato Classification Schemes. He indicated that there were delays as a result of the assertions by MAFF lawyers that generation marking may be deemed to be a barrier to free trade. SERAD intended presenting their proposals again stressing that the changes planned were evolution and nothing revolutionary. They were preparing papers at present and were confident of success although it would not be for the year 2000. As a fall back he suggested the trade should initiate a voluntary scheme, not only to show commitment but also to show that our industry were attempting to meet what customers wanted. M. Barnes at SASA said that they now recorded the age of virtually all stocks and that they could help growers in this respect. The Secretary was requested to include the subject on the agenda for the next SPTA Council meeting. C. Greenslade also indicated that the consultation documents on the Seed Potato Regulation would be going out before Christmas to industry for responses by 1 February. Incorporated in this would be the definition of marketing of seed potatoes and the inclusion of pre-basic material into the regulation. The regulation would be a Scottish one because of devolution although MAFF would be involved and kept informed.
  - (b) Plant Health Issues: C. Greenslade reported that the finding of Brown Rot in Northamptonshire had been confirmed. The two fields concerned had been flooded by a river, which was known to be contaminated. Contaminated waterways had also been reported in the Thames basin. There were also reports from Belgium where the most likely source of contamination was also river water. He indicated that there was a risk from any foreign material and that extreme vigilance was required.

This led on to the risk involved in off-farm grading. SERAD had written to all washers and processors in Scotland to try and assess the extent of the practice. It appeared the volume of classified seed treated in this way was light but greater concern was in respect of home saved seed. SERAD had to look at what was acceptable and what was not. Some controls may be necessary and he indicted

there was the opportunity to include these in proposed changes in the Plant Health Regulations next year.

Protected Region Status; C. Greenslade explained the meaning of the Protected Regions. The meeting agreed that the Protected Region Status of Scotland or of any country should be supported. It was a benefit to the whole trade to have regions of high health status to produce initial stocks. C. Greenslade felt the industry should be doing what it can to strengthen the Protected Region Status. He suggested we should make links with Protected Regions in other countries. The Secretary was asked to add this item to the next Council meeting agenda.

(c) **Weights & Measures Issues:** M. Barnes confirmed that it was not part of the Seed Potato Regulation for department inspectors to check the weights of containers. It was a matter for Weights & Measures and Trading Standards staff. She also confirmed that it was normal practice for the last filled container in a batch which did not add up to an exact multiple of the container size, for the label on that container to be altered by the inspecting officer and officially stamped to that effect. For example a 22 tonne consignment in 1,250kgs bags would be made up of 17 bags of 1,250kgs plus one changed to 750kgs and stamped by the inspector. As it was now common practice to have containers greater than 1,000kgs it was suggested that the regulation should accommodate this. C. Greenslade indicated that if industry wanted this it could be included in the consultation by the 1st February.

Before the visitors left the Chairman thank C. Greenslade and his colleagues for their attendance and for clarifying a number of doubts in the memberships interpretation of the regulations. It was agreed this type of exchange should be a regular feature of these meetings.

- (5) **TRADE INSURANCE OR BONDING SYSTEM:** the Chairman gave Linda Scott from Willis Corroon Ltd a warm welcome. Willis Corroon Ltd are the third largest insurers in the world. Ms L. Scott gave a presentation on the type of group cover her company could offer to the trade. She started by giving a resume of the background to the need for some sort of cover. The benefits of credit insurance included:-

Premium known in advance – i.e. a budgeted figure(bad debt losses are not)

Premium is tax allowable – unlike bad debt.

Payment of premium can be arranged to suit cash flow of insured/seasonality.

Provision of information is advice to steer insured away from poor risk clients.

If a loss occurs, cash flow replenished quickly.

Protects you profit – helping to guarantee your company's future.

She detailed three types of cover:-

(a) Whole cover.

(b) Aggregate first loss cover(The policy responds when a set level is breached – usually cheaper than whole cover).

(c) Single name(selected named customer(s)).

A group scheme would be the most attractive and would work out less expensive than individuals taking cover. She required risk assessment surveys to be carried out to assist in obtaining the best quotes possible. Forms were distributed and it was agreed that volunteers would be sought at the next Council meeting. All data would be treated in the strictest confidence. 10 to 20 varying sized enterprises would be needed. R. Baker felt that NASPM members required more of a bond type of cover similar to the ABTA cover with travel companies. She agreed to investigate this and come back with more information.

- (3) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING: Arising from Item (3) para. 3 the Secretary was asked if he had presented a bill to NASPM for the adoption of SPTA's Condition of Purchase. The Secretary had not as yet received the formal request for adoption. Nevertheless, he was instructed to present the account for £100.  
Arising from item (4) it was agreed that a voluntary generation marking system discussed earlier should be debated by both Associations at their next Council meetings. It was felt that if customers wanted to know this information they should be given it especially when SASA were willing to help in this area. If someone did not want to use it the scheme being voluntary allowed him to do so.
- (6) REVIEW OF THE BRITISH POTATO COUNCIL: Both Associations had responded with similar comments. It was felt in the circumstances the JPTC did not require to respond.
- (7) DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: The member considered the discussions with SERAD earlier in the day had been very useful and suggested that MAFF should be invited to attend the next meeting. It was agreed the next meeting should take place towards the end of February at York. The Secretariat was to investigate the use of facilities at MAFF, York and organise the meeting. The venue, date and precise time will be notified later.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman.