

REPORT OF COUNCIL

of

THE SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION

for the year to 31 October 2002

to

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

held in the Ice Rink, Perth
on Thursday 30 January 2003

During the year under review seven meetings of Council of the Association were held and a Report on each of these meetings was issued to the Members of the Association. Only one meeting of the Joint Potato Trade Council (JPTC) took place on 6 March 2002. This meeting as mentioned below was to discuss the proposed new joint body.

The Membership of the Association as at 31 October 2002 was fifty-seven which represents a net loss of eight Members, either as a result of ceased trading, amalgamation of businesses or resignation. As in previous years Council again encourages Members to suggest to the Association Secretary or to a Member of Council the names of Companies or people involved in the Scottish Potato Trade who they consider might be interested in taking out Association Membership. As reported to last year's Annual General Meeting discussions had been taking place with NASPM with a view to forming one organisation. In November the President's Sub-Committee met to put together proposals in respect of the functions and role of the new body as a basis for further discussion. This was put to NASPM and following a favourable response a meeting of the JPTC was held in York on 6 March 2002. Supportive agreement and a great deal of common ground was reached at that meeting as reported in the minute of the Council Meeting of March. A draft Constitution based on the outcome of that JPTC meeting was agreed by Council in May and submitted to NASPM. NASPM responded with

amendments to the Constitution. Some major items, which had been removed or amended were at variance with what our representatives had felt was agreed and minuted at the meeting at York. These alterations were not acceptable to our Council and they were somewhat puzzled at the changes made by NASPM but felt that outright rejection of further discussion was not appropriate at this point. Consultation was still ongoing.

Council continued to work on behalf of Ware Growers and Merchants as well as for those involved in seed. Progress has been slow in resolving the two concerns raised on behalf of ware growers, twice saved seed and the growing of seed and ware on the same holding. SEERAD/SASA were of the opinion that the Plant Health Order governed the current requirements and the subject would be included in consultation, which was originally going to take place as reported last year in 2002 but this still has not happened.

During the year under review representatives of your Association attended meetings with The Scottish Executive and with the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency. These meetings included the Scottish Seed Potato Consultative Panel meeting in November and the End of Season Exporters meeting in June. Your Association also responded to government consultation on various subjects relative to the potato industry. The main subjects which were responded to included:-

1. EU Review of Controls Against PCN. Representatives of SPTA met with SASA to

discuss the various options being proposed. After discussion Council were unanimous that the current requirements for PCN should be retained for seed potato production in Scotland (status quo maintained). They were concerned at the increase in the species *G. pallada* in England and Wales. It was also increasing in Scotland and without some controls on 'farm-saved seed' they felt that Scotland would not be long in following suit. They were generally in favour of the testing of land where farm saved seed was to be produced but not of scheduling the land if PCN is found. Administering such a scheme might be difficult but it was felt the suggestion warranted being look at. If the PCN free status and reputation of Scottish seed was to be maintained it was agreed that tighter controls over 'farm-saved seed' was required.

2. Rhizomania Protected Zones consultation. Protected Zone status for GB was due to expire and Council responded with the recommendation that the status quo should remain. The Minster could not justify retention as there were over 200 cases in England and Wales. Scotland is in a strong position on this front as Rhizomania has never been found here and surveys conducted by SEERAD have all given negative results. They propose continuing these surveys which they believe meets the requirements of the Plant Health Directive and provides an assurance of rhizomania freedom for movement of Scottish seed potatoes through the inclusion of XP-dl certification on seed potato labels. Council was very supportive of the actions taken by SEERAD.

3. British Potato Council Levy Rate for 2002/03. Council agreed that the current level of services provided by the British Potato Council was about right and that the necessary increase in levy should be supported in order to maintain these services. They did however once again stress that costs had to be constantly monitored.

Other matters taken up with government bodies during the season included:-

1. DEFRA/SEERAD policy on voluntary downgrading and re-instating of grades of classified seed potatoes. In spite of DEFRA having confirmed that their policy was similar to SEERAD, some re-instatement had occurred without the application of the certificate holder. They have since confirmed that their policy has not changed but that the odd exceptional circumstance was authorised.

2. Following discussions with SEERAD/SASA on aphid monitoring and the build up of aphicide resistance changes to policy were brought in for 2002. Details were sent out to all growers.

3. Council was concerned at the extent of the increase in the production of unclassified seed potatoes. The general consensus was that there had to be defined regulations on plant health and variety rights. Without a certification scheme there would not be an export trade. It was agreed that the issue of 'farm saved seed' should be the subject of investigation and study before irretrievable damage is done to the classification system, the plant health status and the plant varieties legislation. The risk to plant health was the most serious concern of Council and this aspect was being strongly pursued with SEERAD.

D. J. Harley and D. Y. Stewart continued as appointees to the British Potato Council. D. J. Harley also continued as Chairman of the Seed Sectoral Group. Council records its appreciation to those two members for the work undertaken on behalf of the Association and to A. J. B. Redpath and R. J. S. Doig for their efforts as members of the Seed Sectoral Group.

As in previous years, the Association organised a Dinner and Dance, Golf Outing and Curling Matches. These social occasions continued to be enjoyed by all participants.