

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group

UKPGR summer technical meeting on Friday 28th July 2017, 10.45 – 12.25 RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey, GU23 6QB Minutes

Nigel Maxted, University of Birmingham (Chair: NM)
Charlotte Allender, University of Warwick (CA)
Lydia Smith, NIAB (LS)
John David, RHS (JD)
Julian Hosking (JH)
Frances Gawthrop, Tozer (FG)
Ianto Thomas, Aberystwyth University (IT)

Sophie Leguil, Plant Heritage (SL)
Sarah Trinder, University of Warwick (ST)
Matt Ordidge, University of Reading (MO)
Mike Ambrose, JIC (MA)
Penny Maplestone, BSPB (PM)
Kirsten Ballard, Tozer (KB)
Charlotte Petersen, Defra (CP)

17/16 Apologies (NM)
Peter Hoebe (SRUC), Abi Johnson (EMR), Ian Mackay (NIAB), Catrina Fenton (Garden Organic), Simon Toomer (National Trust), Richard Littleton (Defra)

17/17 Minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2017 (NM)
Minutes from the last meeting agreed.

17/18 Matters arising (NM)
No matters arising

17/19 Orchard network update (MO/JH)
MO reported that the Orchard Network had met shortly after the last UKPGR meeting in March and that work is moving forward slowly. The group meet every 6 months, and the next meeting is due in autumn. There is discussion within the group regarding the intention to join forces to improve the state of variety listings of apples. Organisations involved in this work are the National Trust and the People's Trust for Endangered Species. The aim is to build a NFC database with NFC apple varieties and also include local collections. The National Trust are looking to gather volunteers to support with this work. **MO** also gave an update on the orchard network's genetic fingerprinting work. To date more than 700 samples have been processed and the network have commissioned genetic fingerprinting of 1400 further samples. **MO** is assisting with interpreting the results. **JD** commented that RHS are also looking at doing genetic fingerprinting. **MA** questioned who the lead for coordinating the inventory and database is. **MO** explained that is three way collaboration between National Fruit Collection, National Trust, and People's Trust for Endangered Species. **MO** also explained that the work is commissioned by the local groups and that Peter Laws (fruitid.com) has been heavily involved and is working on a website to bring together descriptions of fruit varieties. **NM** mentioned a newly funded EC H2020 project Dynaversity which is working in this area though not specifically on fruit trees and suggested that **MO** may want to make links with.

ACTION NM: to send email to **MO** with details of groups working under dynaversity grant.

17/20

EU Exit

The group went around the table allowing everyone to raise EU Exit related issues.

LS flagged a recent development at NIAB that they feel is specific to EU Exit. LS explained that NIAB have been a Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) partner for registration of ornamental crops - a pan European initiative for ornamentals. The current contract NIAB have with CPVO (equating to approximately £600K a year) will not be continued. LS explained that NIAB have been informed by the EU Commission that these contracts will cease with Brexit. **PM** commented that this is an issue for plant breeders if there is nowhere to get DUS tests done and added that they are worried about the signal it is sending to the sector. Further it was suggested that problems might arise if UK breeders have to do two DUS's - both nationally and for the EU. **JD** commented that a consequence could be that breeders don't market varieties in UK and just go to EU as it is more cost efficient.

ACTION LS: Circulate NIAB's press release to the UKPGR group to make everyone aware.

ACTION: group to formulate specific questions to Defra regarding issues of DUS tests.

PM advised that the top priority to BSPB is what happens to all varieties on the UK market protected by Community Plant Variety Rights. PM would appreciate assistance in highlighting this issue.

MO highlighted something he felt was *indirectly* associated to EU Exit. His concern was that Defra have aligned the next iteration of contracts to the end of March 2019. While this should not be related to EU Exit, he felt this was something the group should be aware of.

NM pointed out that if this becomes a real issue the genebank managers should feed back to the group, but for now these concerns should be voiced directly to Defra by genebank managers.

JH commented that with regards to EU Exit in general there is an opportunity for PGR (both ex situ and in situ) to push for being included in 'environmental management' initiatives and that way access environmental management funding.

NM commented that this will require efficient lobbying.

ACTION NM: produce one page document summarising points. The group to send useful contributions to this paper to NM.

17/21

ECPGR Update (CA)

CA attended an ECPGR workshop in June in Germany. ECPGR have set up a pan European network for valuation of genetic resources. The June workshop specifically focused on public-private partnerships.

IT is the national focal point for ECPGR and mentioned that there is a proposal for individuals to be able to upload their own characterization data.

NM drew attention to the ECPGR Chairs meeting scheduled for October in Slovenia, the objective is to review the working of ECPGR, its objectives and how they might be improved and made more democratic.

17/23

Awareness raising/opportunities, including Natural Capital Committee (NM/JH)

JH explained that he feels it is important that PGR is accepted and treated as a core part of natural capital and suggested the group should work to ensure this. To do this, the group must agree how to define PGR and what the scope of the definition should include.

ACTION JH: lead on taking this forward. Any communications to be sent to NCC secretariat and chair - CP and RL (Defra) to be cc'd in communications.

17/24

PGR applications/project news (NM)

The group went around the table and shared upcoming initiatives and projects.

JD: RHS are investing in a database upgrade system. This will be externally funded.

CA: started work on ECPGR activity grant scheme looking at characterisation of wild carrot (environmental differences). ST won project funding to look at epigenetic diversity in carrots.

MA: MA is leaving JIC before the end of year and Adrian Turner is no longer with the pea genebank. MA is involved in the recruitment exercise for his successor and there will be a handover period.

NM shared that he has a new job as international scientific advisor for Bioversity International. This involves attending three meetings a year, review grant applications and advising on PGR policy and strategy. NM has also been invited to give a briefing to the EU Agriculture Committee in European Parliament in December. He will talk about conservation and use of PGR and asked for suggestion for key points to be included in his presentation. He also reported that he had been awarded a H2020 grant for a project concerned with PGR networking in Europe, called Farmer's Pride.

17/25

AOB (NM)

PM asked whether Defra had any updates on commercial varieties? **CP** commented that Holly Kelley-Weil is the contact for this and is happy to receive questions via email. **JH** asked whether Defra had an update on where Government stand with regards to legislation on biodiversity conservation in the UK?

ACTION Defra: follow up on where the Government stands with regards to biodiversity conservation legislation.

MO informed the group that Roger Smith has stepped down as chair for the NFCAC. MO also had a question for the group regarding whether there should be a joint UKPGR position on digital sequence information?

NM suggested that perhaps someone should give a talk on DSI at the next UKPGR meeting.

ACTION PM: circulate seed industry views on digital sequence information

ACTION Defra: make digital sequencing information an agenda item for the next meeting. Holly to give an update on the discussions that are taking place internationally regarding DSI.

17/26

Date of next meeting (NM)

Thursday 9 November (Nobel House, London)