

8th Recommended List Project Board Meeting (RLP08)

at 11.30 on Monday 16th April 2012

at PGRO, Thornhaugh, Stoneleigh

Minutes

Present:

Prof Graham Jellis (Chairman)
Dr Susannah Bolton (HGCA)
Dr David Cranstoun (HGCA)
Mr David Houghton (Barley, Oats & Other Cereals Crop Committee Chairman)
Dr Thomas Jolliffe (BSPB)
Dr Penny Maplestone (BSPB)
Mr Nigel Moore (BSPB)
Mrs Heather Peck (Wheat Crop Committee Chairman)
Mr Gary Sharkey (nabim)
Mr Paul Taylor (AIC)
Mr Andrew Ward (Oilseeds Crop Committee Chairman)

In Attendance:

Mr Jonathan Tipples (HGCA Chairman)
Dr Simon Oxley (RL Manager)
Ms Denise Lawson (RL Project & Finance Administrator)

08/01 Attendance & apologies for absence

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Apologies had been received from Mr Bob King and Mr Guy Smith.

08/02 Chairman's Introduction

The season is just starting to get busy. The Planning meetings for the Crop Committees will start soon and the handbook will be ready in time for distribution at the meetings. There will be a meeting for the crop committee chairmen before the start to ensure continuity and the same approach is being used by all committees. The New Members Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 18th April to introduce new members to procedures and administration issues, and is taking place at Stoneleigh. The next Board meeting in June will be critical to agree the final guidelines as proposed by the crop committees for selections and recommendations in the coming season.

The crop committee handbook supplied to the Board today and as amended at this meeting will be the version which will be used by the crop committees at their planning meetings although there is a further board meeting before the commencement of the decision meetings where any changes can be discussed and ratified.

As previously requested issues concerning the make-up and size of the Descriptive Lists and relating rules for them will be discussed later.

Events affecting the UK National List system will be discussed following a report from BSPB on their current discussions with Fera. The Project Board will have an interest in knowing whether any changes in how the National List trials are run are foreseen, that could have an impact on the RL trials.

Committee membership will be discussed with a view to next year's membership, allowing plenty of time to consider the replacement of members who have served their three year term. Details of the accounts will be supplied for information.

There were no other items which have been proposed for discussion under AOB.

08/03 Minutes from the previous meeting

a) Confidential

The minutes were checked by page and no further changes requested so were signed as correct.

Dr Cranstoun asked that there be further discussion later in the meeting relating to item 07/07, the review of the recommendation and appeals process. The minute was agreed as correct, but some further discussions were required around this issue.

b) Non-confidential

The deletions proposed were accepted and the minutes were signed as correct, with one small typo correction in Item 07/10.

08/04 Matters arising not covered elsewhere

The review of the Recommendations and Appeals process – some Project Board members considered that the wording of the handbook relating to the wording of Box 8 was confusing and that some clarification is needed with relation to the selection of oilseed rape varieties and to reflect a consistent approach across all crops. This will be considered further under item 08/06.

Dr Cranstoun confirmed that the minute 07/07 from the last meeting had accurately reflected the discussions, and consideration of balancing features should form part of the discussions for varieties both above and below target. This needs to be set out very clearly in the handbook and Mr Houghton agreed that the 'presumption' to either recommend or not recommend could be clarified further in the text of the handbook. The discussions from the last meeting were summarised for Mr Moore who had been absent from the last meeting. Consistency throughout the handbook needs to be checked.

Mrs Peck asked for procedures to be clarified in a situation in which the opinion of the Project Board hearing an appeal on the balance of features for a variety comparison differed from that of the crop committee and a decision was overturned on appeal. This needs to be clarified for the future, as a difference of opinion on balance of features could be perceived as a basis for appeal, which it is not. The Chairman noted that in the particular wheat appeal to which this referred, the Board had considered that the Committee had placed too much

weight on one particular character and therefore had failed to apply the criteria correctly and that this was one of the defined grounds for appeal.

a) Breeders and committee members' workshops

Dr Oxley confirmed that the New Members meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 18th April at Stoneleigh, when procedures and administration matters will be clarified. If finalised, the Crop Committee handbook could also be distributed.

The RL Training Day is scheduled for Thursday 19th April, and if successful, additional sessions will be run as and when required. Presentations will be made by individual members of the RL team about completion of the workbooks, data validation and disease ratings. Dr Maplestone thanked the RL team for organising this event and Dr Oxley confirmed that the agenda had been arranged with the assistance of Mr Robert Jackson to ensure that it covered what was required by the breeders.

b) Disease resistance ratings and how they are updated

Dr Oxley reported that he had recently attended a meeting with Fera, NIAB-TAG and BLOSS to discuss how the disease ratings are calculated and how this differed from the methods used for National List trials. There are a few differences, one being that the RL data is transformed, whereas NL data is not. Dr Ramans of Fera intends to liaise with BLOSS for advice as to whether NL data should also be transformed. Mr Moore confirmed that he would also follow this through with Fera.

At Candidate Selection stage, there is additional inoculated disease data from breeders which HGCA receive but NIAB-TAG and Fera do not. It would be logical for breeders' NL disease nursery data to be provided as part of the NL dataset so that it could be used by NIAB-TAG to calculate NL disease ratings. Dr Maplestone confirmed that BSPB would be discussing this with Fera and the devolved authorities as part of the ongoing wider review of procedures and payments for statutory services relating to NL.

Discussions continued for a short time about how disease ratings are set and scores are calculated.

Mr Ward asked for a review of the minimum standard for light leaf spot (LLS) this year, as there seems to be a higher prevalence of the disease in the east/west area. He was keen that the minimum standard for LLS in the east/west region be increased this year to reflect the seasonal variation. Prof Jellis reminded the Board that adequate notice relating to the breeding timescale needed to be given to breeders of the intention to increase any minimum standard, and Mr Ward confirmed that this had already been raised at the Protocols meeting in December. If there was a dramatic change in the incidence of light leaf spot, the crop committee could request direction from the Board as to how the matter might be addressed this year.

Dr Jolliffe highlighted that the candidates listed in the 2012/13 Recommended List had LLS scores of 5 or more, and setting the minimum standard at 5 would not make any great difference to the level of resistance available in the market.

The Chairman concluded that this should be referred to the Oilseeds Crop Committee which, if it wished to support an increase in the minimum standard, should prepare a formal proposal for the Project Board, setting out the reasons for a change to be made and the timescale for making it.

c) Progress of oilseed rape questionnaire

25,000 copies of the oilseed rape questionnaire had been sent out with the Recommended List and 1800 had been completed and returned. This represented approximately 7%, which is higher than normally received. The survey has also been available on line via the HGCA website. Dr Oxley asked whether the survey could now be closed, particularly as the return of hard copies had now slowed to a trickle.

Mr Ward commented that he was unhappy with how the questionnaire had been sent out with other material as many growers had reported that they had not received it, and would have completed and returned it if they had. He personally has prompted growers to complete the survey on line and asked that it be left open for another few weeks, in order to gain additional results. He suggested that an additional reminder be issued to direct growers to its location and prompt completion.

Dr Oxley confirmed that the majority of responses had been received via the hard copies. He agreed that the on-line survey would be left open for a further two to three weeks. HGCA Communications had been particularly satisfied with the results as a large quantity of additional HGCA publications had been sent out in response to the survey.

d) Proposed regional boundaries for oilseed rape

Dr Oxley introduced this item reminding the Board that the boundary between the North and East/West regions was drawn to divide the regions where Phoma was the major disease and where LLS was the more important. LLS was becoming more of an issue further south but instead of moving the boundary line further south to take account of this he proposed to leave the line where it was but to use 2 or 3 sites from the north of the East/West region additionally in the dataset for the North and advise growers near to the boundary to look at the datasets from both regions.

The Board discussed the proposal. Mr Moore noted that this was not an issue about LLS information as trials were treated, rather it was about generating more data for the North region, where there was a serious problem with having sufficient data to make good variety decisions. The Board agreed with this and proposed that the boundary line between the regions should be left where it was and that data for the two or three sites in the northern part of the East/West region should be used in the data sets for both the North and East/West regions. Further thought would be needed on how to issue guidance to growers in the boundary area.

It was agreed to refer this recommendation to the Oilseeds Crop Committee for discussion, particularly on the issue of guidance to growers, and to bring it back to the Project Board for a decision in June.

e) Progress with tenders for seed handling, quality and pathology

The invitation to tender for seed handling is on the website and closes for applications on 24th April. Assessment of the tenders will follow with a view to the new contract being awarded to start 2nd July 2012.

The Quality work has been separated into five lots: oil content assessment on oilseed rape and linseed; winter and spring oats; wheat milling and baking; cereals (excl oats); barley micromalting. The invitation to tender closes on 28th May and companies may bid for one or

more lots. Due to the value of the contract, it had been registered with the Official Journal for the EU, for the required statutory number of days.

The preliminary oilseed rape trials for the north will go out for tender and the tender for the inoculated disease tests should be available within the next ten days.

Further information will be given to the next Board meeting at the end of June.

08/05 RL Project Managers report

There has been some damage to oilseed rape varieties which may be connected with the application of the herbicide Fox (active ingredient bifenox). It has been used at a site in Hampshire and has affected some RL varieties and Mr Handley has subsequently contacted all trials managers to identify sites where Fox has been used.

The trials managers have also been asked to do some plant population counts for Sesame compared with Vision as crops of Sesame appear to be thin in some areas. Mr Ward claimed that this was a widespread issue with Sesame across the country.

In commercial crops in the North there were reports of high levels of LLS being seen in previously resistant varieties.

Overall, establishment of trials has been good, and little disease has yet appeared. The only issue has been the one detailed above on oilseed rape.

One set of trials in the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire area will be checked to ensure that appropriate protocols have been applied.

08/06 Crop Committee Handbook

Dr Maplestone had returned some comments regarding the most recent version of the crop committee handbook. The Board will only have received these recently. Some of the changes she was requesting were related to wording/clarification changes but some related to procedural matters which would require discussion by the RL Board.

The Board checked through the proposed changes and agreed a number of wording/clarification changes which had been proposed and agreed others with some modification.

The following procedural changes were agreed:

- At the data review meetings, a non conflicted representative from BSPB would attend (i.e. Robert Jackson or a non-conflicted breeder or non-breeding company representative would attend on behalf of BSPB);
- The sowing of candidate varieties in RL trials: the decision to sow a variety in a subset of trials should rest with the crop committee, although the Breeder may make a request and/or suggestion for a variety to be considered for a specific recommendation. The committee need to have the flexibility to make the decision, so the Board agreed that the wording should be left as Dr Oxley had written it.

- The sowing of varieties in winter oilseed rape trials: following discussions with breeders, BSPB requested that the rule which had been changed in the 2011 season be reversed (regarding the automatic sowing in the alternate region: if a variety had achieved selection in one region and met all minimum standards, with no obvious weaknesses, this variety should automatically be sown in the alternate region (the 'one-region rule')). This will be discussed at the crop committee meeting but there may be practical implications as sowing in the East/West region may be delayed waiting on results for the North. Following the crop committee, this will be discussed further and finalised at the June Board meeting.
- The proposed re-phrasing of the appeals procedure was agreed.
- Sowing of varieties in trials review: when data was limited, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the variety.

Discussions continued regarding the consistency of the message through the decision tree and the handbook. It was suggested that appendices could be developed for each crop committee so that a member may read through their own related area and identify a timeline for any relevant crop and the accompanying decisions.

The 'presumption' to recommend or not to recommend was clarified. Those varieties which were above target, but did not achieve automatic recommendation and/or selection should be 'presumed' to be selected or recommended unless some identifiable weakness could be identified. The identification of such weaknesses would be through consideration of the balance of features against comparator varieties.

For varieties below target, the opposite should apply (i.e. the variety should presume not to be selected or recommended unless some strength could be identified). Again this decision would be based on consideration of the balance of features against comparator varieties.

The crop committee chairmen should be clear in this procedure so they are able to lead the committees in the processes and all three chairmen follow the same procedure. Decisions made at the crop committees will never be completely objective, and this is where the expertise and judgement of the committee members in applying the criteria in the balance of features consideration is essential. The defined comparator varieties will be used to identify strengths or weaknesses in candidates. It is important that the clarification of the decision tree should be read in conjunction with the decision tree, so that Committees clearly understand how to make decisions in Box 8. At the Planning meetings in May/June, all crop committees should receive the same direction and any further concerns should be taken back to the June Board meeting for further discussion.

It was proposed that appendices should be created for each crop following the Planning meetings. Although the intention had been to harmonise procedures in the handbook for all crops, this would be very difficult to achieve due to the highly differing requirements of each crop and the markets. Following the Planning meetings, a crib sheet could be developed for each crop. However, the additional work required to produce crop appendices would be substantial

Prof Jellis thanked Dr Oxley and his team for producing the handbook so far, as it was a substantial step forward in producing a full workable document not previously available in written form.

08/07 Descriptive Lists

It had been requested that procedures be clarified relating to varieties included on Descriptive Lists and procedures in place for removing varieties from the lists to prevent them becoming too long. Mr Houghton reported that he had little understanding on how the Descriptive Lists were managed and very little time was taken up in discussing them.

Previously, informal discussions had taken place with the breeders relating to seed availability and whether their varieties should continue to be listed. Much of the seed production for varieties on the Descriptive Lists does not take place in the UK and this could result in insufficient seed being available for marketing. Spring Oilseed Rape is the most widely grown of the crops on a Descriptive List, and this List is managed well. Feedback has been received that the Descriptive Lists are used and appreciated.

The Linseed Descriptive List is long and the breeders will be invited initially to discuss with the RL team whether they would require their varieties to remain on the list. If that did not resolve the problem, it would be referred to the Oilseeds Crop Committee to discuss and propose a mechanism for removing varieties from the List.

Action: Dr Bolton will organise a meeting with the Linseed Breeders.

08/08 Current situation regarding the National List trials

Mr Moore reported on discussions between industry stakeholders (BSPB, NFU and AIC) and the national authorities on possible changes to the arrangements for organising the administration of UK National List applications aimed at reducing costs and mitigating the impact of proposed substantial increases in statutory fees. He assured the Project Board that the changes would have no impact on the volume or quality of data available from BSPB trials for RL and that there were opportunities for synergies between NL and RL to reduce duplication of effort and costs which should be explored further. He agreed to keep the Board updated.

08/09 New Crop Committee members

Dr Bolton presented the paper previously prepared by Ms Lawson.

At the beginning of the RL Project, although the terms of membership rotation were treated as ongoing from Crop Evaluation, the RL Project Consortium was not bound by this and thus there was some degree of flexibility.

Mr Tipples confirmed that, as a public sector organisation, within AHDB constraints are in place to allow for a maximum of two three-year terms, and a third term of appointment would only be allowed in special circumstances. The RL Project Board choose to follow the same criteria but are not constrained in the same way.

The representatives who were reaching the end of their terms this year were identified and advertisements would be composed by Dr Bolton and Ms Lawson for circulation in September.

08/10 RL Project accounts

Dr Oxley reported that procurement is underway for the Quality contracts, but until awarded, the figures have been estimated for the benefit of the accounts. He also confirmed that the BSPB contract for the co-located trials was nearly ready for signing. In addition, he requested that the consortium partners completed an in kind contribution form.

The Board were advised that approval had been given to extend the BIOS contract to 2016.

When the procurement bids come in they will be considered very closely to identify any opportunities for further cost savings, but it is expected that further cost savings will need to be identified within the project to remain within budget.

Mr Tipples stated that HGCA have a duty to all levy payers to produce a service to all, regardless of the size of the crop.

08/11 AOB

Mr Ward asked whether the date for the Oilseeds Crop Committee meeting could be moved forward one or two days earlier due to harvesting commitments. This will be investigated and the advice of the RL team would be sought.

Post meeting note: Due to the availability of data and the timing of the harvest and sowing dates, it was agreed that it would not be possible to change the date of the August Oilseeds Crop Committee meeting. Concern was also expressed that if the date were changed at this stage, other crop committee members would not be available for the revised date. Prof Jellis contacted Mr Ward and advised him.

The meeting closed at 15:45.

Signed..... Date.....