**UNECE Bureau and Rapporteurs Meeting on Seed Potatoes**

**Emmeloord 27-29 September 2017**

**Report of the meeting**

Attendance: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech, Denmark, Finland, France, India, Netherlands, Sweden, UK, USA.

**Technical Programme:**

Dr Lysbeth Hof, DUS specialist Naktuinbouw, Provided and overview of the EU Variety Listing process and went on to update the group on DUS testing of True Potato Seed (TPS) potato varieties. The group received a detailed explanation of the approach to listing the first TPS variety in the Netherlands (“Oliver” from Bejo Seeds). This required a revised approach to assessing uniformity in the DUS test, including the omission of light sprout characters. The conclusion from Naktuinbouw is that TPS varieties should be considered more like rye grasses (populations) than a clonally produced potato variety. Implications for the treatment of these varieties in certification were discussed in detail.

Mr. Eric Castelijn (Director of NAK) updated the group in information management and the approach taken by NAK to the use and sharing of data associated with certification. The group discussed cyber security and data privacy as well as gathering data from novel sources and sharing data across organisations and purposes.

Mr Jan Eggo Hommes and Mr Henk van de Haar gave an overview of the operational aspects of the NAK certification process and went on to share their experience of developing a risk based approach to inspection intensity.

The group visited the facilities of Bejo seeds which is a world market leader in marketing horticultural seeds. Bejo gave the group detailed information on the companies TPS activity and approach from Mr Rein van Bruchem and Dr Cor Glas. This included a field inspection of the TPS variety Oliver and discussion of the tuber uniformity with the material available for direct scrutiny. Oliver is a tetraploid hybrid variety from Slightly Inbred Parent (SIP) lines resulting in a population of F1 hybrid seed. The company explained that their approach is to market the seed to growers who do not have access to traditional seed potato supply chain but who are more familiar with propagation of horticultural crops from true seed. Their particular focus is on boosting food production in non-traditional markets. The group also visited the Bejo true seed production operation which was very helpful in setting the TPS discussion in context.

Dr Miriam Kooman provided an overview of the testing methods and the NAK approach from transitioning from traditional methods to PCR based methods. Miriam and the NAK staff conducted the group on a tour of the laboratory facilities including sample receipt, sample preparation, bacteriology, virology, nematology and labelling. The group found this visit a very valuable insight into the NAK approach.

**UNECE-agenda:**

***1. Survey of seed potato virus testing methods***

The delegation of Finland presented, on behalf of the working group (Australia, Czech, Sweden, UK, USA, and Finland), the first compilation of responses made to the survey, which were provided by the UNECE secretariat. The Bureau and Rapporteurs discussed the initial findings. The meeting agreed that the working group would write a summary report of the findings and present these at the next meeting. Delegates were invited to consider whether the survey had met its original objectives and think about how to use the survey to inform harmonisation of testing methodologies.

***2. Draft survey of bacterial testing methodologies***

The delegate from the USA led a discussion on behalf of the working group (UK, USA, Israel, Netherland and Finland) on the draft questionnaire of bacterial testing methodologies. The group updated the questionnaire and the USA and working group will use the comments provided to further develop the draft and present this at the next meeting.

***3. Capacity-building leaflet***

The Bureau and Rapporteurs discussed the matter of capacity building, and suggested that, in addition to the capacity-building leaflet prepared by the working group (Australia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States), it would be helpful to have posters giving an overview of the current capacity building activities. These include work with Kenya, Ethiopia and various other countries. The meeting asked if the secretariat would provide a template for these posters in order to take this initiative forward. Discussion on the Capacity Building leaflet was deferred to the next meeting.

***4. E-learning platform***

The delegate of the Netherlands led a discussion on eLearning. The group agreed to take this work forward in conjunction with the work on capacity building. Specific objectives are: to establish what is possible in terms of the UNECE capacity to host and disseminate eLearning content such as documents and online videos; for the group to establish content already available (such as the USDA “Plant Management Network, Focus on Potato”). A revised group was established to take this work forward with the Secretariats comprising NL, Belgium, UK & USA.

It was agreed that Items 3 and 4 should be taken together in the future work.

***5. UNECE pest guide app***

The delegation of Australia confirmed that funding would be provided by Hort Innovation Australia to convert the Pest and Disease Guide into an App.

***6. Food loss/waste***

The Bureau and Rapporteurs reviewed the shorter version on food loss/food waste (initially developed by the Working Group, France, Israel and the United States) and agreed that the revised version should be submitted by the working group to the secretariat for submission to the Working Party in November and subsequent use by the secretariat and delegations.

***7. Guide on minituber production***

The meeting agreed that the working group (Australia, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa) will continue the topic in order to provide a draft for discussion at the next meeting.

***8. Sample sizes***

At its 2017 session, the Specialized Section agreed that a working group led by New Zealand (Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa) would work Annex IX of the standard, which would become a “Sampling annex”. The meeting group deferred this item to the next meeting.

***9. Redefining the term “Designated Authorities”***

The Bureau and Rapporteurs discussed the revised definition of the term “Designated Authorities”, proposed by New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The group revised the document and will submit this to the secretariat for further discussion at the next Specialised Section meeting in Geneva.

***10. Other Business:***

The delegation of the USA confirmed that USA Potatoes had provided financial support to translate the Pest and Disease Guide into Spanish and that this document was now available. The delegation of USA will liaise with the secretariat to finalise publication both electronically and in hard copy.

***11. Future work and other business***

The Bureau and Rapporteurs will discuss the 2018 meeting of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes, to be held in Geneva on 19-21 March 2018, as well as any other business.

* Survey of seed potato virus testing methods: (Australia, Czech, Sweden, UK, USA, and Finland)
* Draft survey of bacterial testing methodologies: (UK, USA, Israel, Netherland and Finland)
* Capacity-building leaflet to be taken with eLearning and poster templates: (Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, UK and USA with the Secretariat)
* UNECE pest guide app (Australia, await outcome)
* Guide on minituber production: (Australia, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa)
* Sample sizes: (Australia, France, Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa)
* Redefining the term “Designated Authorities”: Specialised Section.
* Information sharing on Liberibacter: (All)
* Statement on Blackleg: (All)
* Statement on TPS and other breeding technology (USA, Australia UK and NL)

The group requested an update from the secretariat on the following items: Sustainability Goals Poster, Publication of the Field Guide (printed copy).

**Next meetings:**

* Specialized Section in Geneva 19-21 March 2018
* The group agreed to pursue the arrangements for involvement in the World Potato Congress in May 2018 in Cusco in Peru. This is with three objectives namely to: promote the use of the UNECE standard in South America, to conduct a Rapporteurs meeting, and to build a greater working relationship with colleagues in CIP.