

**SUMMARY OF AHDB POTATO BOARD
HELD ON 12TH NOVEMBER 2019
THE BOARD ROOM, AHDB, STONELEIGH PARK**

PRESENT: Sophie Churchill (Chair), Alison Levett, Phil Huggon, Jonathan Papworth, Mark Taylor, Will Shakeshaft, Chris Wilson, Andrew Skea (by phone)

APOLOGIES: Jim Cargill, Dan Metherringham, Michael Welham

IN ATTENDANCE: Elizabeth Adams, Stu Baker, Ken Boyns, Matt Catlin, Derek Carless, Rob Clayton, Sue Cleaver (SCI) (minutes), Adrian Cunnington, Anna Farrell, Rebecca Geraghty, Martin Grantley-Smith, Tom Hind, Jane King, Rebecca Miah, Bill Parker, Jimmy Phillips, Roz Reynolds

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, AND DECLARATIONS OF BUSINESS INTERESTS

The Chair opened the meeting at 8:30 am and welcomed those in attendance. Apologies were received from Jim Cargill, Dan Metherringham and Michael Welham.

There were no new declarations of interest. The Board were reminded that Mark Taylor was also the Chair of the Fresh Potato Suppliers Association, which had been declared at previous meetings.

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH AUGUST 2019

The minutes from the meeting held on 6th August 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

The Board agreed to consider a York or a Scotland location for the March meeting which would be open for levy payers to attend.

WS confirmed he could provide seed for the GYOP programme.

JP had agreed to succeed MT as Chair of the Sutton Bridge Advisory Committee, and was thanked by the Chair.

Patrick Hughes had begun his role as Head of Potato Export Development. Patrick was based at the Edinburgh office, and would meet the Board members at BP2019, Harrogate.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair's report was taken as read. The Board noted that Potato growers had been badly affected by the rain and flooding, and were having a difficult year. The levy was discussed in relation to these circumstances, recognising that waiving the levy was not permitted, and, more widely, suggestions for alternative levy methods were made.

The Board gave an update of activities they had been involved with since the last Board meeting. There was concern for the mental health of the farming community, with recent health and safety accidents, and difficult weather conditions. There was positive feedback from the Consumer Insight Conference, the REAP conference and discussions at EUPPA. It was noted that feedback



from the Sector Board Conference had been given to Jane King and could be mentioned later when she attended the meeting.

E Board Papers. From January 2020 it was confirmed that Board papers would be paperless and be available on an on-line portal. To support this, all members gave approval for their email addresses to be held by a 3rd party to facilitate this.

Potato Treater Group: It was suggested that WS and MW attend the Potato Treater Group as Board representatives.

TECHNICAL UPDATE – Rebecca Geraghty & Derek Carless

RG and DC updated the Board on work in the technical team, including Farmbench and staffing changes in the Senior Technical Team.

Farmbench was now fully live for all enterprises and was starting to generate benchmarks for combinable enterprises. The Board discussed potential reasons that might lead to a reluctance to enter data into Farmbench. The importance of supportive discussion groups was noted. It was suggested that a check list of information required before the data entry process was begun would be useful (“you will need x y and z from your farm office”). The Board were content with the overall direction that Farmbench was taking, and would now like to be able to start to identify East, North, South, Salad, Seed, Crisping and Chipping trends from the aggregated data.

IPM: REPORT FROM PROJECT GROUP – Martin Grantley-Smith & Bill Parker

MGS gave an update regarding AHDB’s Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Project Group. This covered the drivers for change (including regulation and the loss of chemistry, pest and disease resistance, environmental impact and biodiversity, changes in consumer perception, and climate change), and the proposed role that AHDB could play in IPM. Key elements involved identifying the gaps in existing research, interpreting research and developing tools to integrate the information for use on farm, and assisting farmers and growers to make decisions on the best way to use the information to meet their IPM goals in the most effective and profitable manner.

The Board discussed the politics and consumer perceptions involved in IPM decisions. It was noted that consumer concerns also include waste and plastics (more so than pesticide usage). The Potato Board were in support of the IPM programme, and pleased that it involved collaboration with industry and the NFU. They highlighted the need to get the KE messaging right and also the need to progress to activity in the next year. The Chair thanked the team for the work that had gone into the project so far, and looked forward to seeing a more tangible programme over the next few months.

MARKETING ENGAGEMENT UPDATE – Stu Baker, Anna Farrell, Rebecca Miah

The Board discussed the industry meeting that had taken place on 8th November 2019, which had explored the possibilities of a fresh and frozen industry consumer campaign using Kantar segmentation data. After much discussion about funding models and budget allocation, it was agreed to keep the conversation moving forward by providing timescales and costings for a creative campaign. To be successful it would need sufficient resource from AHDB and from the industry. The Chair highlighted the need to communicate back to industry promptly.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONAL REPORT

The latest management accounts were discussed by the Board. The levy income was lower than had been expected. The Chair highlighted the overall spend on research and KE in relation to total budget. JK noted that the Board should be considering the need for fewer but bigger bundles of work that create more impact, rather than trimming costs and maintaining many small bundles of work. The Chair requested that once the new strategy was in place, the headings in finance

should align with the programmes of work. She also suggested that whilst big changes to budgets are always most impactful it is also worth looking at many small efficiencies, given that AHDB also suffered from a fairly high number of small overspends.

STRATEGY AND POTATO SECTOR PLAN

RC presented an updated version of the Potato Sector plan. The Board debated the fine detail of some of the phrases, but appreciated the overall direction that was being taken, with positive clear wording that was easy to decipher.

It was noted that an evaluation of the impact of the current research programmes should be used to inform the decision making regarding the future R&D programme.

RC requested a clear steer from the Board regarding budget allocation. There was a detailed debate on how funding should be allocated. The Board were encouraged to consider how to best deliver the key elements of the new strategy by approaching the budgets with a clean slate, rather than “salami slicing” the current budgets. The Chair challenged the Board to be very clear on their vision for the new strategy. She suggested that it had two main programmes: the transition to fewer chemicals and an IPM approach, and protecting the future of potatoes with the consumer. She suggested that these focus areas would clarify where less investment was needed.

RC would take all the comments into the next iteration of the plan, and present the Board with some budget options to consider. The Board requested that this included comparisons with current spends.

CEO UPDATE – Jane King

JK gave the Potato Board an overview of current issues including Purdah, the recruitment process for a new AHDB Chair, and the ambition for the new AHDB strategy and the role of AHDB going forward, acknowledging the delay in the Government’s response to the Request for Views. The Board would be presented with some initial results from the Defra Request for Views before Christmas, with further detail shared in the New Year.

DIGITAL AND COMMS – Matt Catlin / Jimmy Phillips

MC gave the Board an update on latest developments in digital including a tour of some to the main features of the AHDB website. www.ahdb.org.uk The Board were positive about the work that had taken place in digital, and thanked the team.

JP gave the Board an update on the work taking place within the Comms team. He put forward a proposal to the Board to transfer the information from the 8 page printed publication “Tuber Talk” in to a magazine format under an “Arable Focus” banner. This would have more quality content and a more engaging format. Icons would be used to highlight potato content. The Board were very positive about this proposal.

STORAGE UPDATE – Adrian Cunnington / Jimmy Phillips

JP updated the Board with the comms work that had taken place regarding storage research. There had been over 3325 total active engagements (events, videos, podcasts etc).

JP gave the Board an overview of the plans for BP2019 in which Storage would be the number one priority. The Chair thanked JP for the fantastic amount of quality work that the presentation represented.

AC gave the Board a technical update on the results coming out of the CIPC replacement storage research. The Board were interested in the cost of the CIPC replacement programmes, as well as

the varietal differences that were emerging. It was noted that this was just the result of one year's work, and these were not recommendations.

AOB

The Chair closed the Potato Board meeting at 15:00 hrs.

