

**SUMMARY OF AHDB POTATO BOARD
HELD ON 6TH AUGUST 2019
THE BOARD ROOM, AHDB, STONELEIGH PARK**

PRESENT: Sophie Churchill (Chair), Jim Cargill, Alison Levett, Dan Metherringham, Phil Huggon, Jonathan Papworth, Andrew Skea, Mark Taylor, Will Shakeshaft, Michael Welham, Chris Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE: Rob Clayton, Sue Cleaver (minutes), Sue Lawton, Roz Reynolds, Stu Baker, Elizabeth Adams, Tom Hind, Christine Watts

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, AND DECLARATIONS OF BUSINESS INTERESTS

The Chair opened the meeting at 8:30 am and welcomed those in attendance.

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. He would leave the room if there were any discussions in which this would cause a conflict of interest. MT's final meeting as a member of the Board would be January 2020.

The Board approved the proposed 2020 meeting dates. It was agreed that the March 2020 Board would be off-site. It was agreed to hold another Open Board in 2020 and the Board discussed the impacts of the different dates on growers' attendance.

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST MAY 2019

The minutes from the meeting held on 21st May 2019 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Board noted the minutes of Sutton Bridge Advisory Committee.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST MAY 2019

An update on the matters arising from the meeting held on the 21st May was given.

CHAP were proposing a "one stop shop" for all decision support needs on pests and disease, which would potentially compete against Fight Against Blight and other AHDB services. CHAP's service would run as a commercial subscription service. The role of AHDB was to provide a baseline service good enough for everyone to use. There were also market failure gaps, for example in relation to gardens and allotments regarding blight. As a result it had been decided that AHDB would keep their services running.

The Board were disappointed that levy payers who had filled in the Levy Payer Satisfaction Survey (LPSS) had not been emailed any updates of change resulting from the survey. They felt that this did not show that AHDB was listening, and it would de-motivate levy payers from filling in surveys in the future, as well as create a negative impression of AHDB. The survey had now taken place 10 months ago, and it was suggested that an appropriate method of acting on it now may be through a Comms piece, but the Board were all in agreement that there must be a better response from AHDB after the next LPSS. There was a discussion regarding the added complication of the delayed Defra Request For Views (RFV) survey results.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

There had been good areas of progress including in the continuing strengthening of the KE team and programme, and the improved presentation and data of the weekly MI review. There had been a successful Open Board visit to Herefordshire of the main AHDB Board with levy payers present. The Chair had attended Europatat in which the CIPC work of AHDB and the industry wide response to storage issues was commended.

Rob Burns, Head of Crops Export Trade Development would retire from 31st August 2019. There was a strong message from industry to recruit the best person possible for the export role, and AHDB were working with a recruitment agency to move this forward.

The Board discussed planning a visit in early 2020 to focus on cutting edge potato growers, showcasing the best examples of ground-breaking practice and visiting growers who are preparing for the changes that will come in the next 10 years. In particular it was important that potato growers are part of the move to the IPM / ICM as actives are withdrawn and government and the public looks towards competitiveness with sustainability.

The Chair summarised the discussion that had taken place at the working dinner the previous night. Rebecca Geraghty, Interim Chief Technical Officer, had attended the dinner and led a comprehensive conversation covering a broad range of issues (KE engagement plan, Farmbench, technical programme, IPM, sector expertise). The Board very much appreciated Rebecca's knowledge and overall summary of where AHDB is with Research and KE, and particularly her commitment, understanding, and use of language that everyone can understand.

The Board had noted the continued improvement of the SPot Farm programme and the positive progress made. They highlighted the continued need to keep the programme quality high so that growers stayed interested.

The Board sought reassurance that there would be a technical potato specialist recruited as well as a Head of Resource Management to replace the expertise of Mike Storey who had retired. This assurance was given. It was noted however that recruitment was challenging for various senior technical roles.

The Board were concerned that the KE team could not access the same level of grower information that was available to the Levy Team, as a result of AHDB's interpretation of GDPR. They sought more clarity on whether greater access could be granted to a team who were, after all, informing levy payers of products they had already paid for.

FINANCE AND LEVY

RC presented the latest accounting figures. The Chair questioned the increase in KE project costs of £24k. She also noted that the band E Export Executive role had been "removed", and requested clarification on this. The Board noted the increase in costs in Digital and requested further information.

The utilities costs of Sutton Bridge were noted. RC confirmed that procurement had now given approval to investigate cheaper utilities for Sutton Bridge in order to reduce costs. JP was thanked for his input into this at the Sutton Bridge Advisory Committee.

The Board discussed the levy report noting the bad debt and undeclared area figures. They were glad to see the online transition seemed to be broadly working.

The seed certification scheme and issues of quality and supply within the seed supply chain were discussed. There would be value in looking at how other countries manage their systems, such



as Netherlands or Brittany. There was an opportunity for AHDB to have a role in opening up conversations to allow the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to get hold of accurate data on stocks and crops, to allow improvement of the English and Welsh certification scheme.

DIRECTORS AND OPERATIONAL REPORT

RC presented the Operational Report. The Board discussed concerns regarding seed export issues as a result of Brexit, including labelling issues where potatoes in transit after 31st October may have incorrect EU labelling. There would also be potential issues with crops going to Ireland from Suffolk and Essex. Defra leads on this area, not AHDB and the Board were encouraged to fill in the Defra survey asking for impact to business.

Blackleg advice would be discussed at Potatoes in Practice (PiP). It was important that AHDB was seen to be fully involved in the conversation.

STORAGE CAMPAIGN

The Board recognised that AHDB's initial response plan to storage issues was written under emergency conditions and now wanted to see some more strategic and longer term plans in place. Adrian Cunnington had distilled the feedback from industry and suggested additional priority storage research projects. This included work on ethylene and spearmint responsiveness, the sensitive of processing varieties to lower temperature storage, work on CIPC decontamination and store cleaning, and the effect of elevated carbon dioxide on processing quality. (The latter might arise if stores were better sealed in an attempt to improve efficacy of newer, more volatile suppressants). The Board discussed the merits of each proposal and the issues surrounding storage. There was a discussion regarding DMN and the Board highlighted their concern if DMN does not get approval.

The Board were supportive of the proposals in principle and requested that AC consider proposal 2 (CIPC decontamination and store cleaning) as being the core risk area. They understood that there would be an increase in costs, but firmly believed that storage technologies are crucial to the survival of the industry. They requested AC come back to the Board with more detailed proposals and costings for formal approval.

PROJECT CROSSKEYS UPDATE – ROZ REYNOLDS / ELIZABETH ADAMS

The Board were reassured that the project was running to time and that the procurement process was now underway. The Board thanked the team for their hard work and the progress that had been made.

REVIEW OF GROW YOUR OWN PILOT YEAR – ROZ REYNOLDS / SUE LAWTON

RR and SL gave an overview of the Grow Your Own Project. DM declared an interest in the project, as McCain would like to support the project as the principal sponsor. This would be non-branded support. The Chair thanked DM for the good news, which was much appreciated by the Board.

The Board were impressed with the reach of the programme, which had sent out 15,842 growing kits reaching 466,000 children. This was on a reduced budget from the previous year, but had managed to increase the number of boxes by 5%. 1643 potato resources were downloaded from food-a fact of life were downloaded in July and they increased followers on social media by 42.4%. There was a lively discussion on how to make the most of the project within the local communities and via the media.



POTATOES

New seed suppliers were required for 2019, and WS, AS, JP, and CW volunteered to provide seed to the project. It was important that this was first early, so that the children would get a good response from their work.

The Board were enthused by the way GYOP had grown the number of boxes, on a reduced budget and still receive excellent feedback from schools. It was noted that the paper did not give a strategic view of the future of the project and was not a formal evaluation of the pilot. However on the basis of the report, the board wished the project to continue, whilst still looking for sustainable options for the future.

AHDB were partnering with the British Nutrition Foundation and had transferred resources to www.foodafactoflife.org.uk website. This provided resources for schools all year round, as well as teacher training, face to face conferences and webinars.

MARKETING UPDATE – STU BAKER

SB provided an update on the Food Advisory Board, Food Service work and the recent industry marketing workshop.

AHDB was working up a joint strategy plan with NFU and Red Tractor to see how they could work together within food service. The main funding for this work was from the Beef and Lamb Board, and the £20k from the Potato Board allowed them to piggy back some work within this initiative.

There had been a positive meeting with the Industry Working Group. This was now further ahead in terms of discussions and conversations about possible marketing options. AHDB had committed to gathering all the data that has been received and using this to inform some pragmatic recommendations for an industry funded model for marketing (akin to dairy). It was important to be clear on what could and could not be influenced. Board members would be updated at their next meeting.

AOB

The Chair revisited MT's tenure. MT had been retained to help with storage issues, but it was right that the membership terms of office were upheld, and as Chair of FPSA Mark had a conflict remaining on the Potato Board. The Chair proposed to the Board that MT continued to sit on the Sutton Bridge Advisory Committee without being there as a Board member. A new SBAC Chair would be required and the Chair was to progress this. The Board agreed to this proposal.

There was no further business. The Chair closed the Potato Board meeting at 12:15. It was followed by a meeting to discuss future AHDB strategy with industry representatives.