

Project Title: Development of the Assured Plant Propagation Scheme (APPS) to allow alignment with BS. En 45011 and compliance with EUREPGAP Standards.

Project number: CP 28

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Report: Final report, December 2005

Previous reports: NONE

Location: CMI, Oxford.
Plant Propagation Nurseries in England

Project Co-ordinator: Annette Carey

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Date Completed: February 2006

Key Words: Plant Propagation, Assured Plant Propagation Scheme, EN 45011, EUREPGAP, seedling traceability

GROWER SUMMARY

Headline

- The Assured Plant Propagation Scheme (APPS) is now aligned with EUREPGAP Standards and available for plant raisers to join.
- An independently verifiable standard (to EN 45011) for the production of soft fruit, vegetable and salad seedlings will:
 - Provide for the traceability of food crops back to the seed lot from which they were produced and
 - Set best practice standards for the consistency and health of seedling production.

Background and expected deliverables

Plant Propagators Limited is a non-profit making group of UK based soft fruit, vegetable and salad seedling plant producers, who joined together in 1995 to collectively promote the quality of their plant propagation practices and to search for ways to improve the technical aspects of seedling production. Fundamental to the achievement of these aims is the adoption, by all members of the “Assured Plant Propagation Quality Statement”¹, which sets out the aims, organisation and systems that members will use to achieve hygienic standards of seedling production which will consistently meet customer requirements. This common policy statement forms the basis of each individual nurseries system for the management of seedling production. Once successfully achieved, the scheme looks to ensure that a business structure is in place to facilitate the process of expansion and development.

From an industry perspective, the widespread adoption of the scheme by seedling producers will help push nursery practices even higher. The Assured Plant Propagation Scheme (APPS) encourages nurseries to consider the wider issues such as pollution minimisation, efficient energy use and wildlife conservation, thus helping to promote the image of the industry.

The APPS presents a professional image of seedling production to growers and to their whole sale, processing and retail clients. Indeed the successful adoption of the APPS has now become a pre-requisite of supply to many packers and retailers.

Accreditation schemes have grown rapidly in other countries supplying food into the European market. In order to continue to compete in this global market it is essential that UK producers continue to set the standards by which other producers have to be measured to ensure the safety, traceability and consistency of the food produced.

UK retailers are committed to sourcing from EUREPGAP accredited suppliers. The likely and most cost effective way that UK seedling plant producers can

¹ Appendix 1

achieve such accreditation status will be through access to a benchmarked Assured Plant Propagation Scheme. One of the requirements of EUREPGAP is that benchmarked schemes are accredited by an official accreditation body, for example UKAS in the UK. The accreditation / benchmarking of the APPS would effectively mean that food retailers, processors and wholesalers could demonstrate complete “due diligence” in their food supply chain, when seedling plants are sourced from an audited plant propagator.

Summary of the project and main conclusions

The successful conclusion of the project has provided:

- General Regulations for the APPS²
- An APPS Standard³
- A Self-assessment Check List

In addition this has allowed UKAS to bench mark the APPS against EN 45011

Final training of members in respect of the scheme will be undertaken on the 9th of February 2006.

Plant Propagators members (23 nurseries) have now registered with the APPS administrator (CMi), and the first audits against the new standard will be undertaken from April 2006.

Financial Benefits

CMi have undertaken to maintain APPS audit fees in line with the fees paid to DEFRA who audited the old scheme.

Plant Propagators members who, in addition to producing seedling plants, also undertake crop production will have an additional benefit from undertaking the APPS as core elements of the APPS also cover BRC, Natures Choice and Assured Produce protocols. Such overlap conveniently allows a cost benefit of audit.

Plant Propagators Limited is a founding member of EU Plant - the European Association of Vegetable and Salad Plant Propagators. EU Plant is composed of organisations representing plant propagators from Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, Holland and the UK. EU Plant members have expressed an interest in developing the APPS within their own countries. To facilitate this the existing Assured Plant Propagation Scheme Logo is being registered as a Certification Mark by Plant Propagators Limited. This registration will allow any seedling plant producer to seek accreditation through the scheme. It is anticipated that the revenue from the licensing of the certification mark will be used to maintain the standard from 2007.

² Attachment 1

³ Attachment 2

The APPS will, from the time of registration of the Certification Mark, be available to any seedling producer. Membership of Plant Propagators Limited will not be a pre-requisite for accreditation.

The Future

The development of the APPS for conventionally produced soft fruit, vegetable and salad seedlings has highlighted a need to develop a similar standard for "*Seedlings produced for transplanting within an organic system*".

Action points for Growers

- At an individual nursery level the adopting of the Assured Plant Propagation Scheme (APPS) by seedling producers is a key management tool helping these businesses:
 - a) Comply with current legislation by encouraging delegation and staff development.
 - b) Ensure that issues of seedling quality, traceability and matters of customer care are adequately and continuously addressed.
- From an industry perspective the adoption of the APPS will assist in the development of common standards for seedling production, throughout Europe, where no such standards currently exist.

Growers can contact Plant Propagators Ltd. For further information on the scheme: PPL, 69, Tormore Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 9UR.

ASSURED PLANT PROPAGATION SCHEME

This statement sets out my Policy for the Management of the "Assured Plant Propagation Scheme" and makes reference to specific Systems for:

- Housekeeping, Hygiene and Site Management.
- Plant and Equipment Maintenance and Repair.
- Crop Protection -Including Pest, Disease and weed monitoring and control;
- Product Selection;
- Chemical Storage and Disposal;
- Staff Training and Competence;
- Records of Application and Health Surveillance;
- Equipment Calibration and Maintenance;
- Growing Records - Including seed variety and lot, peat lot, irrigation, fertilisation, temperature regimes and tray movements.
- Staff training and Competence.
- Environmental Assessment - Including Waste Minimisation, Recycling, Recovery and Disposal Practices.
- Dispatch, Transport and Delivery.
- Trading Terms and Conditions - Including Insurance, Product Specification and Customer Care Procedures.

The fundamental aim of this Scheme is to Assure my customers of the consistency and effectiveness of the management standards in plant propagation, particularly in relation to:

- Nursery Hygiene and Plant Health;
- Propagation Techniques;
- And Staff Competency.

The systems of practice referred to in this Policy Statement set out my businesses provisions for managing the Assured Plant Propagation Scheme. As a Member of the Scheme my business is required to continue to demonstrate, and show due diligence, in respect of each of these systems, and is audited on an annual basis by an independent accreditation authority "The Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate", a division of DEFRA. As a member of the scheme I am bound to comply with this Policy and with the detail contained in the Systems outlined above.

A list of members accredited by DEFRA in respect of the Assured Plant Propagation Scheme is published annually.

Signed by:

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Managing Director Partner

Date: