

Pre Basic Growers Association

Chairman's Report for 2015 – 16

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to what is now the Forty Fifth Annual General Meeting of our Association –and our first AGM in here in St Andrews. Once again AHDB Potatoes have been very helpful in finding accommodation for our AGM and we are very grateful to them for the use of this room this evening. On Association membership, although we lost two of our long standing members during the year we've gained a small number of new members and our membership stands at 40 full members and 16 associate members.

It remains the case that the Association is regularly consulted by the Scottish Government and others on matters of early seed production and we both value this relationship and welcome the opportunity to contribute. These consultations and our close relationship with policy makers and the scientists at SASA mean that we are able to influence policy on seed marketing and the areas funded by research and development. We have also made representations to SASA on our members' behalf during the year. Several of our members have been directly involved in funded R and D work on blackleg over the last 2 years and I know that our willing participation has been welcomed by those responsible for the research. Andrew Skea attended a recent review meeting on the topic on our behalf last month and there will be more on this later in the meeting. Initial findings do seem to confirm growers' observations that infection of pre basic seed can occur from aerial spread of the bacterium. Bill Rennie and I attended a UK Consultative Panel meeting in Harrogate last year following the potato event there and there will be a full UK Consultative Panel meeting here in the hotel tomorrow morning. An interesting outcome of last year's meeting was that the English

authorities agreed to change the proposed timings to introduce the new classification arrangements in line with our arrangements following representations from the industry there.

Your committee met at John Anderson's in Kincaig in February to plan our summer study visits and to deal with other Association business. A decision then was to plan for a two day study visit to the Scottish Borders in July and this resulted in excellent visits to Peter Shiells at Mertoun Estate and to Greenvale's store and pack house facilities. Our thanks to Peter and to Dan Parsons, farm manager at Mertoun, for what turned out to be a most interesting and worthwhile visit. Thanks too to Euan Stark and to Niall Arbuckle for their hosting of the visits to the Greenvale sites. Our timing for these visits proved to be impeccable given that many of our participants travelled south through torrential rain before things cleared up for our St Bothwells visit. A visit to the Born in the Borders craft brewery at Kelso gave us an interesting angle on farm diversification and an overnight stay in Kelso allowed some discussions to continue until the small hours.

Another decision made at Kincaig was that this year's Dr Hardie Award would be made to Dr Colin Jeffries who has managed the National Quarantine Unit at SASA for many years and who has made a major contribution to the monitoring of potato germplasm moving in international trade. The Award will be presented to Colin at tonight's dinner.

We continue to have excellent relationships with the staff at SASA and Triona Davey who took over from Denise A'Hara has given us great support throughout the year. We were pleased that Triona and her colleagues were able to join us on our study visits to the Borders in July. We also recognise and value the excellent relationship we have with John Spiers and his colleagues in Saughton House.

In closing I express my thanks to my fellow committee members who have given me great support during my two years as your chairman. And I wish my successor, Andrew Skea, a successful two years as incoming chairman.

The Association's committee includes the following members: Andrew Skea, Graeme Currie, Rob Scott, Lesley Tweedie, William Campbell, Sandy MacGowan, Calum MacIvor, Ian Fordyce and Craig Bartlet.

If you have issues that you feel the Association should be pursuing please let one of our committee members know.

I trust you have found today's Seed Event worthwhile and I do hope you all enjoy tonight's dinner.