

ESCOP Agenda Brief
July 20, 2011

Agenda Item: National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee

Presenters: Lee Sommers/Eric Young

The National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee (NPGCC) met in Beltsville, MD on June 16 - 17, 2011 at the USDA/ARS George Washington Carver Center. The meeting attendees were Lee Sommers, Peter Bretting, P.S. Benepal, Ed Kaleikau, Jerry Arkin, Eric Young, and Gary Pederson, and Chet Boruff (AOSCA) and Tim Cupka (ASTA) by phone. Guests included Rita Mum (National Association of Plant Breeders), Ed Knipling, Carid Rexroad, Judy St. John, and Robert Burk. Below are some highlights of the presentations and discussion.

1. Ed Knipling Comments

- Budget issues are #1 priority currently and are causing ARS to better define its core activities. Genetic resources are still a primary core activity
- Legislators still ask what is role of government, university and industry in maintaining germplasm
- A House amendment to cut ARS's FY 2012 budget by 70% because its activities are viewed by some as duplicative, failed by a 300-85 vote, but there were still 85 House members in favor of this cut, which represents an educational challenge
- Fee for services question keeps coming up with respect to providing plant germplasm. Free and open sharing of germplasm is still a primary USDA principle, so ARS will not charge, even for handling. In addition, it's not considered to be cost effective to charge fees for germplasm samples due to the added administrative cost for handling the fees. Germplasm is a "public good", and this needs to be emphasized.

2. Peter Bretting – NPGS Update

- FY'11 budget for NPGS was cut \$700,000
- President FY'12 proposes \$3.3 Million increase, but the FY'12 House markup reduces ARS 12%, however its unknown how that would impact NPGS
- None of the prior NPGS funding increases, which were once considered earmarks, were cut because most of them were re-categorized as base funds
- Roundup Ready Alfalfa was de-regulated in January, 2011, which has resulted in the following actions by ARS
 - Initiating new research on gene flow in alfalfa
 - Alfalfa germplasm seed increase may be moved to a more isolated site at Central Ferry, WA
 - A decision was made to re-establish the National Genetic Resources Advisory Council
- GRIN Global will be completed by June 30. ARS will begin to deploy it in late 2011 or early 2012
- ARS scientists are working on a method to cryopreserve micrografted citrus and other clonally propagated germplasm

- Review of ARS national program on plant genetic resources will happen in October – November
 - Stakeholder workshop will be held in Beltsville on Nov 16 (tentative)
 - ARS Scientist workshop will be in spring, 2012
 - Last Fall, Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted out of committee the FAO International Treaty on germplasm sharing, but the full Senate did not vote on it, so it has to start over in the Senate FRC with the new Congress
 - In October 2010 the parties to the Convention on Biology Diversity (CBD) adopted the Nagoya Protocol on Access & Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources. This establishes a common set of rules for exchange of germplasm, but the US is not a party to CBD and therefore does not use the protocol
 - NPGS cost and demand are increasing and budget is decreasing
 - Maintenance of germplasm collections is still top priority
 - Emergency acquisition of endangered germplasm is also high priority to avoid loss of valuable resources
3. AOSCA – Chet Boruff
- About the same number of new varieties seeking certification but lower portion from public breeders
 - Currently figuring out how to deal with GMO varieties and seed purity
 - Concerned about de-regulation of GMO crops and maintaining purity of all seed types, particularly for organic growers
4. PGOB – Gary Pederson
- 2012 PGOB meeting in Pullman, WA, June 7
 - Interested in establishing procedure for acquiring breeders germplasm collections when the university breeding program is not continuing
 - National Assoc of Plant Breeders may be able to help communicate when a breeder is retiring or leaving a program
5. NIFA & AFRI – Debbie Sheely and Ed Kaleikau
- Recruiting for NIFA Assistant Director for Food Safety and Nutrition, NIFA Budget Officer and Director, Office of Planning, Accountability, and Reporting
 - Will not hire Principle Scientists now due to budget cuts
 - AFRI and germplasm
 - CAP grant award – Barley and Wheat germplasm for changing climates
 - Future RFA's that involve use of NPGS germplasm will have wording that requires involvement of the appropriate curator
6. National Genetics Resources Advisory Council – Ed Knipling, Robert Burk, Caird Rexroad, and Judy St. John
- This Advisory Council is being re-established, originally set up by 1990 Farm Bill, last met in 1999 but has been unchartered since then
 - Originally established following concern in 1980s regarding the NPGS
 - Function and purpose are different than NPGCC, one does not replace the other, so there should be a connection between the two groups

- Primary motivation to reform NGRAC now is de-regulation of GMO alfalfa
- Need advice from stakeholders on how to handle coexistence of de-regulated GMO crops and non-GMO crops
- Robert Burk will be the Executive Secretary for NGRAC
- Nine appointed members and seven ex-officio non-voting, 2/3 appointed members from scientific disciplines, 1/3 from other relevant fields
- Nominations are due June 30 and Council should be formed by end of July
- Ex-officio members include representatives from:
 - OSTP, NIH, REE, NSF, DOE, NAL, and NPGS National Program Leader
- Want to ensure broad representation among appointed members
- Prefer nominees represent an organization, rather than an individual, and not be a Federal employee, although that is not forbidden
- Four year appointment with some initial appointments for two years to stagger terms
- Charter of NGRAC has to be renewed every two years
- Appointed member can send a substitute, but they can't vote
- Need to send nomination letter and appointment form to Robert Burk by June 30
- NPGCC will recommend to ESCOP that Lee Sommers be nominated to represent ESCOP and NPGCC on the NGRAC

7. ASTA – Tim Cupka

- Working on a better understanding of IP rights and access for research activities

8. Wheat MTA – Lee Sommers

- Worked out agreement during meeting with AES directors, Tech transfer officers, and industry representatives from SD, NE, CO, OK, TX, and KA
- Main provision of MTA is that material shared by the members with each other cannot be shared outside the membership for at least 5 years
- Current members are Colorado State, Oklahoma State, Texas A&M Univ, and Kansas State, which make up a significant portion of the hard wheat breeding and production

9. National Association of Plant Breeders – Rita Mumm

- New association that formed out of the Plant Breeding Coordinating Committee (SCC-83)
- Significant overlap in goals and priorities with NPGCC
- Proposed liaison to NPGCC is David Baltensperger, TAMU Crop Science Department Head
- Approved establishing liaison position for NAPB

10. Next NPGCC meeting in June, 2012, in Beltsville