

**MEETING OF FARMER AND GROWER BOARD  
TUESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2012  
At South Plaza, Marlborough Street, Bristol BS1 3NX**

**Present:** Gillian Butler, Pauline Dixon (part), Adrian Dolby, Oliver Dowding, Kate Edwards, Haydn Evans, Pete Richardson, Tom Rigby, Alan Schofield, Chris Walton and Charles Weston.

**In attendance:** Sam Adams (part), Sandra Bartolomeu-Rook (minutes), Helen Browning (part), Martin Davies (part), Tom MacMillan, Sally Morgan (part), Ben Raskin and Jim Twine (part).

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Charles Weston welcomed Chris Walton and Kate Edwards to their first Board meeting. Apologies were received from Guy Dibble, Graeme Matravers, Ian Noble, Alan Smith and Nick Walton.

**2. FARMER AND GROWER BOARD MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**2.1 Farmer and Grower Board away days on 15-16 May 2012**

Notes taken as read.

**3. GOVERNANCE**

**3.1 Election results, Terms of Reference and voting procedures**

It was noted that only current Board members and co-optees had put themselves forward for election. Charles also confirmed that Adrian Dolby would be standing down after this meeting. The Board thanked Adrian for his wise counsel and company over the past six years. It was **agreed** that:

- a) Guy Dibble, Oliver Dowding and Pete Richardson should remain on the board without an election; Haydn Evans should take Adrian's place on the Board and Nick Walton be re-coopted.
- b) With effect from February 2013, all current Board members will serve a minimum of one more year.
- c) A clause will be added to the Terms of Reference stating that one third of the elected members stand down each year.

**3.2 Chair succession**

Charles reported that Haydn was prepared to step into the role of Chair next year.

**4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE**

**4.1 Food for Life (FFL)**

Helen Browning explained that this programme of work had moved on a pace over the last couple of years with commissioning progressing well.

**4.2 Land Trust**

Trustees had commissioned a review of the Trust and its farms looking at areas where savings might be made and where there was potential for new income.

**4.3 Sustainable Food Cities**

A bid to secure our work on Sustainable Food Cities going forward had been submitted.

**4.4 Fairtrade**

Helen reported that SA Certification had won the tender to deliver the audits for the Fairtrade Foundation bringing real benefits to our licensees

**4.5 Communications team changes**

Helen was pleased to announce the appointment of our new Director of Communications, Georgina McLeod and Sally Morgan, Producer Communication Manager.

**4.6 Defra consultation on our ability to test ingredients**

It was noted that Defra were currently consulting on how farmers, growers, processors and certification bodies may test for and investigate pesticide residues in organic produce.

The SA felt strongly that the proposed changes had the potential to severely challenge the integrity of organic produce in the UK and threaten consumer confidence in organic produce.

#### **4.7 Annual conference 2013**

Helen explained that the decision had been made to combine next year's AGM and Annual Conference which will give us an opportunity to showcase some of our work (9-10 Oct).

### **5. FACING THE FUTURE**

#### **5.1 Duchy Originals Future Farming Programme (DOFF)**

Tom Mac Millan explained that Facing the Future was the umbrella for our work around innovation and farming . The aim was to help farmers everywhere reduce their inputs and improve productivity in ways that are healthy and sustainable.

'Field labs' were workshops designed to help farmers share best practice, obtain the research they need and successfully trial new ideas.

Tom also reported that the SG had endorsed a pioneering, farmer-led approach to disbursing the research fund.

#### **5.2 Head of Farming update**

##### **5.2.1 Events**

This programme of activity was chosen in an effort to 'rejuvenate' the community feel of the SA and to try and help members feel engaged in a network of likeminded people. Martin reported that we had received excellent feedback from the farmers and growers who attended these Farm Walks which has given us confidence to roll this out to a programme to 30 next year. Alongside 'field labs', we will also hold 6 day long events that deliver knowledge transfer and training in a specific area.

##### **5.2.2 Producer Membership**

Martin also explained that we had a five year target to double our external membership, which we hoped to achieve following the launch of a new package. Helen stressed that our producer membership offer was very good value and that we had a huge amount to offer to farmers who are not farming organically.

##### **5.2.3 Soil symposium**

Ben reported that this had been a tremendously successful event.

##### **5.2.4 Organic X Seeds**

A list of available organic spring cereal seeds would soon be circulated to all UK certified organic producers but Martin was aware, through our work with the Organic Seeds Working Group, that there were major disease concerns.

##### **5.2.5 CSA project**

Ben was pleased to report that funding had been secured to continue our CSA work for a further 12 months with a focus on producer-led CSAs.

##### **5.2.6 Apprenticeship and traineeship**

Ben explained that the agricultural apprenticeship had been placed on hold for the foreseeable future. However, a new programme which will develop a 6 month traineeship will be launched in the New Year. This will allow us to bring many more organic growers on board who were unable to commit or host a 2 year placement.

#### **5.3 Low Carbon Farming update**

Sam Adams gave some background to the Low Carbon Farming project, funded through EU through Defra, and the Ashden Trust, which aimed to support farmers in understanding their farm's carbon footprint and adapting their management to reduce on-farm greenhouse gas emissions. The Farm Carbon Assessment Tool (FCAT) was launched at the Soil Symposium and took an alternative approach to assessing a farm's carbon footprint. Instead of focusing on figures and tonnes of emissions it allowed you to look at the aspects of your farm which contributed to your farm's carbon footprint and scored key farm practices in relation to their impact on greenhouse gas emissions – highlighting areas for improvement, providing targeted, technical support and enabling you to monitor your progress towards best practice in relation to low carbon farming and lowering the

emissions impact of your farm. Our FCAT was designed as a signposting (rather than benchmarking) tool towards best practices and freely accessible online.

## **6. POLICY**

### **6.1 GM position**

Tom made the point that this updated statement was not a change in position but a clarification of our stance on GM in light of repositioning our work in the innovative sector. There was some discussion regarding F1 hybrid seeds now banned by Demeter, an issue which the Horticultural Standards Committee had wrestled with in the past. Ben explained that their use had increased whilst open pollinated varieties were often neglected, not maintained or developed. Gillian made the point that GM had failed to deliver on a lot of its promises and that the alternatives in gene technology, genemarker selection and genome were much more exciting.

### **6.2 CAP**

Emma Hockridge explained that timings were dependent on budget negotiations, it was hoped there would be agreement by the end of June 2013 but this was now looking unlikely. Budget cuts were likely to take place and impact on both Pillar 1 and 2. Next thing to keep an eye on were RDP negotiations. The UK was in a marginal position in the debate, but the SA was working closely with IFOAM, the National Trust and RSPB and will be feeding into work looking at OELS and the rural development agenda.

### **6.3 Soils and Antibiotics**

Tom reported that there would be some opportunities to work with our members and potentially licensees, provisionally planning work on cotton and neonic/pesticides. Last year, the SA joined forces with Sustain and Compassion in World Farming to form the Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics; the SA wanted to do more on antibiotics and use in-house opportunities such as *Living Earth* to highlight antibiotics resistance issues and tie up with 'Field labs'.

Soils was one area where the SA had a lot to say but was also a difficult subject to engage the wider public on. Charles urged the SA to reach out to wider members of farming community as this topic has tremendous potential in the long-term. There was also potential to form more international partnerships in this area.

## **7 ENABLING CHANGE**

### **7.1 Business Development Director Update**

Jim Twine explained that there many reasons to be Optimistic. It was noted that the Catering Mark was on target for 15% growth and Jim was pleased to report that the new Catering Mark Supplier scheme, free to SA licensees, would be launched on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Another area of focus was the need to ensure land base and supply base for organic production.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **8.1 Dates for 2013 (agreed, all in Bristol)**

26<sup>th</sup> February, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 26<sup>th</sup> November

### **8.2 NFU Organic Issues Group**

Ruth invited the Chair of the Farmer and Grower Board to join the NFU Organic Issues Group as SA representative.

### **8.3 Clopyralid**

Pete had a request from Thames Organic Growers (TOG) re Clopyralid (creeping into green waste in America). Ben who had already done a survey with Phil Sumption a year ago agreed to follow up and Ruth offered to get an update from their adviser.

### **8.4 Sárvári Trust**

At Oliver's suggestion, it was agreed that the Sárvári Trust, would make a presentation about its blight resistant potato at the next Board meeting.

### **8.5 Chancellor's use of agricultural statistics**

Oliver also mentioned George Osborne's use of agricultural statistics in a speech he made to the Royal Society on 9th November 2012.

