

NRSP-6 TAC Zoom Meeting Minutes

August 18th, 2020

Chair: Rich Novy

Vice Chair: David Douches

Minutes by: Max Martin

Participants:

John Bamberg <john.bamberg@ars.usda.gov>; William Barker <william.barker@wisc.edu>; Benoit Bizimungu <benoit.bizimungu@agr.gc.ca>; Peter K. Bretting <peter.bretting@ars.usda.gov>; Walter De Jong <wsd2@cornell.edu>; David S. Douches <douchesd@msu.edu>; Ronald French <Ronald.D.French@aphis.usda.gov>; Joyce Loper <loperj@science.oregonstate.edu>; Jean-Francois Meullenet <jfmeull@uark.edu>; Joseph E Munyaneza <joseph.munyaneza@ars.usda.gov>; Richard G Novy <Rich.Novy@ars.usda.gov>; Joshua Parsons <Joshua.Parsons@pepsico.com>; Philipp W. Simon <Philipp.simon@ars.usda.gov>; Ann Stapleton <ann.stapleton@usda.gov>; Craig Yencho <Craig_Yencho@ncsu.edu>; Alfonso Del Rio <adelrioc@facstaff.wisc.edu>; David Spooner <david.spooner@ars.usda.gov>; Jiwan Palta <jppalta@wisc.edu>; Shelley Jansky <shelley.jansky@ars.usda.gov>; Jeffrey Endelman <endelman@wisc.edu>; Max Martin <mwmarti1@wisc.edu>; Jesse Schartner <jesse.schartner@usda.gov>; Vidyasagar Sathuvalli Rajakalyan <Vidyasagar@oregonstate.edu>; Cari Schmitz-Carley <cari.schmitz-carley@aardevo.com>; Tamas Houlihan <thoulihan@wisconsinpotatoes.com>; Max Feldman <max.feldman@usda.gov>; John Talbott <John.Talbott@oregonstate.edu>; William Behling <behling3@msu.edu>

Meeting started at 10:00 am CST

Rich N: Main topic of today's meeting is that the recommendation from the NRSP-6 review committee of the SAESD's is to not renew off the top funding of NRSP-6. SAESD's will have a full vote on this in September. If they vote not to renew the project, there is a one-year grace period and the funding would end in September of 2021.

Asked for the approval of the 2019 minutes as provided by Sagar. David D motioned to accept the minutes, first by David and 2nd by Craig Y. Minutes were approved.

Asked for the approval of the 2020 agenda. David D motioned to except the agenda, first by David and 2nd by Benoit B. Agenda approved.

Ann S. and Craig Y needed to leave the meeting early so they were moved up on the agenda.

Ann Stapleton: New NIFA National Program Leader introduced herself, and had no updates from NIFA.

Craig Y: Will advocate for the Genebank with our Ag Experiments Station representatives in SE. No germplasm report for the SE region. Kathy Haynes will be replaced, but the position will be moved to Orono, Maine. Interviews have occurred already and we should know Kathy's replacement in a few weeks.

Bill Barker: SAESD NRSP-6 representative. Stated that SAESD's NRSP-Review Committee (RC) recommendation is that funding of NRSP-6 be terminated. Everyone universally agrees that the Genebank is critical and it performs exceedingly well. That is not the criticism that they are basing their decision on. For a long time, it has been suggested that there needs to be more support from industry. John B did a nice job of working with the two commercial entities that breed potatoes. The RC did not feel that industry support went up fast enough and that \$150,000 a year was an overly large support for a project that has been going on for so long. NRSP's were not to be legacy projects that go on forever. This Genebank is funded differently than any other Genebank. I (Bill B) don't have any optimism that it will be funded again.

Jean Francois M: There is not overwhelming support from the south for the Genebank. Will talk to his colleagues and get as many to support it as he can. Hard to get support for long term projects. The idea of reduced support to \$50,000 has been tossed around.

Rich N: Asked that everyone read the paragraph from SAESD's NRSP-6 RC recommendation paragraph 4, pasted below. It appears that the overall feeling of NRSP-6 RC is that funding of NRSP-6 lies with ARS and not with Experiment Station Section.

No other ARS programs with a single commodity are supported by the NRSP mechanism as off-the-top Experiment Station funds and all other gene repositories are supported by industry, such as the National Clonal Germplasm Repository for Citrus, as an example. Moreover, language in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill) included a charge to USDA-ARS to develop a strategic plan for sustainability of the National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS). As such, the NRSP RC concluded that the responsibility of funding NRSP6's efforts ultimately lies with ARS, not the Experiment Station Section (ESS).

The experiment station directors state that the genebank is funded differently, and that the USDA should revamp how the Genebank is funded.

David D: What I read from this letter is that they want it funded in a different way.

Craig Y: I agree that we need to move on to a new funding strategy, in that the Potato Genebank is hanging out there different from any other commodity and we need to get it back in the fold.

John T. For the past 3 years in the Western region discussions about NRSP-6 has come up regarding and whether we should continue funding it off the top. Most NRSP's move on to other funding. Western states want see some other method of supporting potato germplasm. Everyone knows the value. There has to be a better way to fund this.

Rich N. 25 years of potato breeding, and really understand the importance of NRSP-6. From the discussion it looks like funding will be lost, so I would like the discussion to focus on addressing this shortfall.

John B. Pointed out that all these arguments against status quo funding of USPG have been addressed over the past three years and the "Midterm" plan appended to the agenda was finalized over a year and a half ago. Note that it describes our thorough search for alternate sources of support. He updated why NIFA special grants turned out to not be an opportunity.

He mentioned that if states wanted a different mechanism, it always made sense for them to reconfigure their state contributions, not expect ARS or Industry to take over, and described how contacts had been made with the WR and NCR leadership. He opined that many said it made sense in theory, but nobody was inclined to commit until a crisis happened. He mentioned that we have been pointing out for years that the current funding mechanism is not broken. It was considered appropriate for over 70 years. He pointed out that when NRSPs were invented about 1990 the explicit stated intent was for stable long-term funding, not the short-term investment program. He pointed out that the official current NRSP guidelines say in italics for emphasis that not all projects must phase out and that we have carefully and repeatedly presented the RC with the case for why USPG is a perfect fit for ongoing support. He said that these and several other salient points are posted as a link on the genebank homepage, and were made available for directors participating in the regional spring meetings. Discussed what the 10 or 20 percent cut would mean to the Genebank. As the proposal says, we could absorb a 10% cut. If more, we would eliminate custom work and evaluation that promote the use of germplasm by our customers. If even more, we would reduce or eliminate the clonal collection. For a long time JB was looking for donors for \$30K. As a University employee Max M salary is funded from this account, nonrenewal of the NRSP-6 budget would impact this position. John suggested the specific counterproposal of \$75K for FY21-23 to cover Max should be made from the floor at the ES meeting next month.

Josh P: Asked what percentage of orders of seed vs tissue culture and tubers.

Jesse S: Orders are split at a 60% true seed, 20% tissue culture, and 20% tubers.

Jeff E: We all know we need a genebank and we need to figure out how to fund it. It is not right to put this on the genebank staff and we should have a committee of the stake holders and develop a recommendation to the community to work on solving this.

Rich N. We need to educate the industry of the genebank and its importance to the potato community. Perhaps Peter can comment on how the funding of NRSP-6 is different than other genebanks and discuss a model of how we can address the shortfall for NRSP-6.

Peter B. Presentation on the history of the funding of the Genebanks. This presentation will be attached. Four of the Genebanks are partially funded by off-the-top funds from the region in which they are located. NRSP-6 started out as an interregional supported project and then in the early 1990's was changed over to the NRSP-6 model.

Rich N. How would you go about changing NRSP-6 to a regional project with funding similar to that of the other four genebanks that were mentioned?

Bill B. Probably not going to be a viable option to ask the central regional directors to provide off-the-top funding for supporting the Genebank at Ames and the Potato Genebank.

John B. I had put out the idea to state experiment station directors with a large potato production and value (the Western and NC regions are the main producers) that those two regions split the 20% of the cost for NRSP-6 off the top funding = \$30K, in a 2:1 cost share based on that corresponding approximate value of production of the crop. This did not go anywhere.

Bill B. This issue predates the pandemic and all the Universities are now heavily impacted. Trying to get increased funding from anyone during these fiscally tight times is unlikely.

Jeff E. Not reasonable to expect NC region to pick up the bill. This is not what I was after I just wanted clarification. Let's see what the Potato lobby can do. It is a powerful group and maybe they can get something written into the Appropriations Bill to cover the funding of NRSP-6.

Joyce L. Is it a possible to get this funded from the ARS budget? Would this work or are there other things that are at play that would be obstacles to that approach?

Peter B. Addressed that there have been targeted increases in a few areas in the ARS budget. Funding increases for germplasm are driven by commodity groups. Hawaii coffee industry pushed for a genebank for coffee. Citrus industry got an increase for the Citrus germplasm. Congress directed a new Hemp germplasm set up in Geneva and appropriated money to get this done. Bottom line is that commodity groups can get this done.

Rich N. If we lose the funding at the end of September how do we come up with additional sources for funding the Genebank. Peter mentioned that there was some increase for a few commodities. Let's see what we can do moving forward.

Jeff E. Can we get some of the money that will be available due to researchers retiring in Madison? (Shelley J and David S.) Could the priorities be changed so that some of those funds could be used to fund the Genebank?

Joe M: Money that is earmarked for specific areas cannot be moved around to cover other projects. They are very much coded and the stakeholders watch that very closely. Need to bring new money to get it appropriated to things like the Genebank.

Tamas H: Executive Director Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association: He will bring it up at the next state manager meeting, which is also attended by Potatoes USA. They do a lot of lobbying. A review committee needs to look at what the options are and where to ask for the money. \$150,000 is not that much when you look at the benefit nationwide, and he will talk to the directors of the other major potato growing states.

Joe M: Permanent funding has to come from the Congress and this is what is needed for funding the Potato Genebank.

Rich N: Tamas, I think it is a good idea to share this information with the other directors and come back to us, and we will form a committee with the breeders and industry involved and decide how to move forward to get permanent funding for the Genebank.

Tamas H: I will bring it up at the next meeting and have John B., Rich N., Jeff E., and David D., join us in a future Zoom meeting to educate our group on the Genebank and the funding problem.

Ron French, from APHIS had a report on what has been processed and personal changes. Processed 70 true potato seed lots, and clonally we were able to test 40 clonal accessions. Next year we are planning to process 56 seed lots and 44 clonal accessions.

David D: Presented the North Central Germplasm report.

Walter D: Presented the North East Germplasm report.

Craig Y: Had no germplasm report for the Southern region.

David Holm was not present so no germplasm report from the Northwest.

Rich N: Presented the USDA Germplasm report.

Benoit B: Presented the Germplasm report for Canada.

These reports are on the NRSP-6 web site.

Joe M: Talked about the new ARS Grand Challenge Synergies Project. The idea is to get ARS scientists to work together to work on a project that is really too big for any individual to take on. One was awarded to Shelley, Paul, and Dennis to support diploid breeding projects and haploid selection.

John B: Gave a report on the NRSP-6 Annual Report, which is posted on the Genebank web site. He pointed out that many of the activities highlighted in the report would go away with uncompensated loss of NRSP6 support, since they are the custom evaluation, germplasm development, characterization that has been said to be an outstanding advantage of the potato genebank. He also noted that this kind of work creates demand for orders so is responsible for some of the strong distribution numbers.

Rich N: Commented that the knowledge and familiarity with the germplasm at the Genebank is what makes it so much more valuable. An example is *S. microdontum* and its resistance to tuber greening.

David D: Comment that the work John B and Jiwan P are doing in Peru is a great connection and a give back to the country from which the germplasm originated.

Next meeting will be held at the Genebank on Tuesday, June 22nd 2021, with that being dependent on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and how the SAESD votes.

Some talk if the NRSP-6 is not funded, perhaps this committee will be associated with the Potato CGC.

For 2020 - 2021

Chair, David Douches

Secretary, Benoit Bizimungu

A farewell to Shelley Jansky and David Spooner.

A big thank you to the great work that they did for the potato community.

Zoom sign off at 1:20 pm CST

