
Minutes of a Working Group on *Avena*

Ad hoc Meeting, 23 July 2004, Helsinki, Finland
J. Mike Leggett, *compiler*

Minutes of an *ad hoc* ECP/GR *Avena* Working Group Meeting, Helsinki, 23 July 2004

J. Mike Leggett

IGER, Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3EB, UK

Draft agenda

1. Welcoming address
2. Introduction of the participants
3. Approval/amendments of the agenda
4. Election/appointment of Chairperson of the *Avena* Working Group (AWG)
5. Election of two AWG representatives to the Cereals Network Coordinating Group (CNCG)
6. Plan of action for Phase VII (2004-2008)
7. Council Regulation 870/2004 (1467/94) New GENRES project
8. Budget proposals
9. Drafting of the report
10. Conclusion

The Chairman welcomed the participants to the working group meeting, and stated that he intended to chair the meeting throughout even though it was hoped a new chair would be elected. It was explained that both the present meeting and the previous meeting in Yerevan during 2003 were going to be considered to be *ad hoc* meetings as ECP/GR had thought that on both occasions it had not been feasible to ensure that every full member had the opportunity to attend either meeting. The next full *Avena* Working Group meeting would thus be the VIth, which is currently scheduled to meet during 2007 in conjunction with the Cereals Network meeting.

The chair welcomed frank and open discussion from all present regardless of their status in terms of full member or observer, though if any agenda item came to a vote, only full members would be able to cast a vote.

The participants introduced themselves and gave a brief description of their work.

The agenda was approved as it stood.

Some discussion was held regarding who might best represent the *Avena* Working Group (AWG) as chairperson and a couple of suggestions were made. Ultimately it was thought that the new representative from Greece, Andreas Katsiotis might be best suited to the position as he has already had experience in coordinating the EU/GENRES project and was familiar with genetic resources and molecular biology (of oat and olive). All present agreed to this and Andreas accepted the position.

With regard to selection of two AWG representatives to the Cereals Network Coordinating Group (CNCG), the chair suggested that it would be sensible to elect the new chairman as the CNCG representative for the AWG, and to retain the European *Avena* database (EADB) manager (Christoph Germeier) as the second representative. This was accepted by all present.

The Plan of action for Phase VII (2004-2008) was discussed and the following were the main conclusions.

In situ conservation

The chair has already alerted the Spanish AWG representative (Pedro Garcia) to an ongoing PGR Forum. He may be able to incorporate *A. murphyi* into their project. Pedro has already made contact with José Iriondo (Spanish partner in the EU project PGR Forum) and we await any progress.

Regarding the *in situ* conservation of *A. insularis*, the Italian AWG representative (Fulvia Rizza) thought that there may be a possibility of conserving some sites in Sicily and would pursue the matter further.

Regarding the *in situ* conservation of *A. maroccana* and *A. murphyi* in Morocco, Chaouki Al Faiz and Nezha Saidi thought that there may be some avenues which could be explored in order to conserve at least some areas in Morocco.

Some further discussion around the subject of *in situ* conservation followed and it was agreed that it might be feasible to have *A. maroccana*, *A. murphyi*, *A. insularis* and possibly *A. prostrata* included as red list species, which should prompt the respective governments to act to preserve these endangered *Avena* species.

Further collection of endangered species

The chairman pointed out that there was a budget allocation (Euro 10 000) for 2005 for two collectors over a three-week period to further collect the species mentioned above. A request was made for suggestions as to who might make the collections. The chair anticipated that the country representative would be involved, possibly with one other. After some discussion, it was suggested that the chairman (Mike Leggett) who had considerable experience in the collection of *Avena* might undertake the task. The chair replied that his future next year (2005) was very uncertain and he could make no formal commitment to undertake such a task.

Council Regulation 870/2004 (1467/94) New GENRES Project

The chairman pointed out that there was still little detail of the new call and that it was anticipated that further detail would be published in September and certainly by the end of the year. The present GENRES project (Evaluation and enhancement of *Avena* landrace collections for extensification of the genetic basis of *Avena* for quality and resistance breeding) was to hold its final project meeting the following day (24/07/04) and had invited Mr Fred Steenhoff from the EU Commission who, it was hoped, might be able to give a better indication as to what angle the group should take with regard to the submission of a further proposal.

Various suggestions for topics were raised including: quality, drought, salt and cold tolerance, resistance to pests and diseases, grazing season duration, plant height and percentage husk (i.e. genetic variation for reduced husk, rather than having a completely naked grain).

It was thought that this round might require bigger projects and that it might be prudent to include at least one of the 'new' EU member states. A bigger project might also need to involve the other cereal crops, especially barley, though it was thought that if wheat were to be included this might dominate an application.

Bioinformatics seems to be one of the 'hot topics' and it was thought that there should be a bioinformatics input to whatever project was finally decided on. Likewise, it was thought that there should be some emphasis on molecular biological technologies in relation to the project.

The suggestion that the new project might involve the genetic variation for organic farming practices was also made, which might involve organic bakers.

It was also thought that the genetic variation for the various quality issues such as the small but valuable 'micro ingredients' (e.g. β glucan and Avenathramides, etc.,) might be a suitable topic for a new proposal. It might indeed be advantageous to build on the present landrace project data to give 'added value' to the previous submission.

It was also suggested that pre-breeding might be incorporated into a project as this had been identified as desirable during the Cereals Network Meeting in Yerevan in 2003.

The chairman reported that the sum of Euro 3000 for the participation of 3-5 participants to attend a one-day meeting to formally prepare a GENRES project proposal was available. This was earmarked for 2004 and would need to take place shortly after the final text appears.

Any other business

The system which has been adopted by the steering committee for the selection of attendees at the various working group meetings was discussed. There was concern that in essence, country coordinators choose which working groups will be supported at any time during the current phase. This has a clear possibility of the 'stronger' groups taking precedence over smaller working groups. The AWG requests that ECP/GR monitors this situation to avoid any possible bias.

The Chairman said that it had become evident during the International Oat Conference (IOC) that there was a lot of oat genetic resources work going on throughout the Nordic countries, and that input to the group from the individual scientists would be highly beneficial, improving the genetic resources communication and collaboration within the Group and the EU.

List of participants

| Name | Country |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Lenka Nedomova | Czech Republic |
| Ilmar Tamm | Estonia |
| Jean Koenig | France |
| Christoph Germeier | Germany |
| Andreas Katsiotis | Greece |
| Fulvia Rizza | Italy |
| Rita Redaelli | Italy |
| Nezha Saidi | Morocco |
| Chaouki Al Faiz | Morocco |
| Louise Bondo | NGB |
| Igor Luskutov | Russia |
| Rickard Jonsson | Nordic Countries |
| Mike Leggett | UK |