

**Minutes of SEQ RAC Meeting – 22 March, 2010**  
**Joh Bjelke-Petersen Research Station, Kingaroy**

meeting commenced at 9:30am

**1. RAC introduction**

The co-ordinator introduced the new three-year RAC term: 2010 to 2012.

**2. Chairman's Welcome and Confirmation of Agenda**

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members and guests.

**3. Attendance**

Members: P. Enkelmann (Chairman), C. Clark, J. Cross, N. Jorgensen, J. Kingston, W. Learmont, I. Crosthwaite, P. Harden, A. McDonald.

Nominees: R. Williams (QDPI), R. Taylor (GRDC), D. George (UQ)

Guests: J. Allen (grain grower), L. Neilsen (BGA), M. Bell, (QDPI), H. Brier (QDPI)

Co-ordinator: N. Jensen

**4. Apologies**

G. Birch, T. Rook, A. Sanderson, E. Colson, G. Fitt, S. Webb.

**5. Election of Chairman**

With the commencement of the new RAC term the existing Chairman, Peter Enkelmann, stood aside and nominations were called for the position of Chairman.

Peter Enkelmann was nominated (moved C. Clark, seconded J. Kingston) and elected unanimously and unopposed as Chairman for the coming year.

**6. Confirmation of Minutes** from the meeting of 26 August, 2009

*Confirmed*

**7. Business**

**7.1. National RD&E Framework**

Dr Williams provided an update on the National RD&E Framework. The State Ministers for agriculture have decided that every State can't afford to fund RD&E in all areas of agriculture, so every agricultural sector has been prioritized by each State. Queensland has been a driver in this process and some projects have already moved to a National focus: for instance, with South Australia taking the lead on poultry research and Victoria taking the lead on dairy research.

The National Framework committee for grains is being led by GRDC and Western Australia (DAFWA). There are grower representatives on the National Framework committee for grains (e.g. Wayne Newton for the Northern Region), but they are bound by confidentiality restrictions. The National Framework committee for grains is close to finalizing an RD&E capacity audit, and plan for the future. Ministerial sign-off is expected mid-year.

QDPI has put itself forward as the "lead" agency for summer grains and tropical pulses, but there were questions about what this means in terms of the level of investment in RD&E for these crops, and also about where peanuts and soybeans stand in the current National Framework scheme.

For the Northern Region, the GRDC Northern Panel has developed a plan which will be released as a Discussion Paper.

Information provided by Prof. Peter Sharp about developments at the University of Sydney's IA Watson Grains Research Centre in Narrabri was tabled. A significant development at the Centre is the construction of a ~\$6million International Grains Research building.

## 7.2. Future of barley breeding in the Northern Region

Mr Taylor reported that GRDC has been in negotiations with QDPI about the future of barley breeding in the Northern region, and GRDC are waiting to see what QDPI will do before deciding upon future funding for the Northern node. He noted that Australia cannot support three malting-barley breeding programs.

Dr Williams reported that QDPI is committed to the existing Barley Breeding Australia (BBA) arrangements (which include a Northern breeding node at Warwick) until June 2011.

However, the Department is working on transferring to a more “commercial model” than the current arrangement, which is funded by QDPI and GRDC. BBA are undertaking a survey of potential commercial investors.

It was noted that at the recent Northern Region Barley Advisory Committee meeting there had been a strong indication that QDPI and GRDC will decrease their investment in barley breeding in the North, with the future barley breeding effort in Australia likely to be based in South Australia and Western Australia.

## 7.3. Queensland Government initiatives

- a) “Fresh Approach” for Grains – research stations and infrastructure (Grains 2020).

The “Fresh Approach” for Grains has been re-branded by the State Government as “Grains 2020”, and the “Grains 2020” document was tabled.

Dr Williams reported that “Grains 2020” will modernize the grains RD&E infrastructure in the State and that a Ministerial announcement (with AgForce) will be made shortly.

- b) What does it mean for RD&E at JBPRS when Minister Mulherin says JBPRS will be an “Agribusiness Service Centre”?

Correspondence from Minister Mulherin to Mrs Dorothy Pratt MP (Member for Nanango) regarding the future of the Joh Bjelke-Petersen Research Station (JBPRS) was tabled.

The Minister advised Mrs Pratt that “we are not considering closure of this site, but rather a transition into a future regional Agribusiness Service Centre”.

In response to questions from the RAC, Mr Williams indicated that Agribusiness Service Centres provide services to all agribusiness sectors, including farmers, and that they are “driven by client needs”. It was unclear whether that would translate to more staff at the JBPRS, and what level of grains-related RD&E would be supported at the JBPRS.

- c) QAAFI – Queensland Alliance in Agriculture and Food Innovation.

Dr Williams provided an update on the QAAFI Institute at the University of Queensland. UQ and QDPI are developing QAAFI in order to strengthen agricultural research in Queensland, get better science outcomes, attract additional funding, and increase student numbers. Once QAAFI is established, approximately 40 QDPI staff are expected to become UQ staff (QAAFI staff). QAAFI will focus on three main areas: plant science (including grains), animal science and food technology. QAAFI will be a “virtual centre”, with no new infrastructure being built to house the Institute. A Director has been appointed (but not announced), and efforts are underway to have QAAFI up and running on 1 July 2010.

## 7.4. National issues

- a) Grains Levy Payers’ Association

Dr Jensen provided an update on national grain grower representation and developments since the Grains Council of Australia announced its imminent closure. Grain growers require a national representative body to fulfil a number of non-legislated and legislated roles, including the accountability of GRDC to growers (levy payers) under the *PIERD Act*. Because there are important RD&E functions for a national grain grower representative group, GRFL put together a Discussion Paper on the topic (in 2009) and, then in February 2010, a Check List outlining some key components of a new national model. A business plan for a group called Grain Producers’ Australia has been developed

by an independent committee and that document should be distributed by the committee shortly.

b) Productivity Commission Review

It was noted that the Productivity Commission is currently holding an inquiry into the Rural Research and Development Corporations, including GRDC.

There was some discussion about the current levy system, and how some of the smaller crops could benefit from having a higher RD&E levy than the standard 0.99 percent levy.

## 8. RAC members' reports

RAC members reported to the meeting.

Comments included:

- Plantings in the region were generally on the late side.
- The recent extended period of wet weather had resulted in extra disease pressure, especially in peanuts (net blotch, *Sclerotinia*, leaf spot, rust), and to a lesser degree in corn (*Diplodia*).
- The registration of chemicals for use in minor crops continues to be an issue for growers in the region (i.e. lack of options).
- Agronomists and growers were confident to use recommendations arising from QDPI's work (H. Brier *et al.*) on threshold levels for insects in grain legumes.
- Plantings of mung beans and navy beans were up compared to previous years.
- Sorghum inoculation issues had been encountered (a new product did not work well when planting into dry soil).

Mr Harden (PCA) gave an update on peanut RD&E:

- The focus of the program is on disease resistance: foliar disease screening is continuing, with some lines looking promising; and there is an effort underway to develop disease resistant long season varieties. There is some screening for resistance to soil-borne diseases.
- High yield is also a priority within the peanut breeding program.
- Two new varieties are close to release.
- Breeding for reduced Cadmium uptake is less important now that the standards have changed (they have increased by a factor of five).
- Work is continuing to develop dryland and irrigated varieties.
- PCA is collaborating with the University of Sydney regarding functional food attributes.

## 9. Guest Speakers

### 9.1. Dr M. Bell (QDPI)

Dr Bell talked to the RAC about their level of support for setting up a project to investigate additional summer grain legume options.

Under the National Framework, QDPI are the "lead" agency for summer grain legumes. The issue of nutrient depletion is increasingly serious in the northern grains region and a wider range of tropical grains legume options is required if legume crop frequency is going to increase in the farming system. In the first instance, an opportunity exists to test Australian-derived, insect resistant pigeon pea varieties from ICRISAT.

It was agreed that new summer grain legume varieties would only be successful if they contribute to direct farm income (i.e. through grain sales) – it is not enough for them to only contribute to farm productivity as a green manure.

It was thought that the GRDC's new crop sequencing projects would not cover the same ground the proposed project: the proposed project would be investigating new options, not just existing ones.

*Action item:* discuss the project proposal with the Northern Region RAC Chairmen to see if the other RACs are also supportive of the project.

**9.2. Mr L. Neilsen** (General Manager of Bean Growers Australia Ltd, Director of Soy Australia)  
Mr Neilsen talked to the RAC about observations from his March 2010 marketing trip to key overseas pulse markets. He had valuable insights (in an international context) into why a co-ordinated and increased RD&E effort for pulses is required in Australia.

**9.3. Dr H. Brier** (QDPI)

Dr Brier talked briefly about two current IPM projects. He also demonstrated the “Turning Point” technology, which is being used by QDPI to get information out to industry.

**10. Review of priority issues for the Central Queensland region**

**10.1. Pulse priority areas from last meeting - update**

- a) Ensure information is available to growers (extension, Crop Management Notes, etc).  
With the last QDPI restructure, Julie Ferguson and Jayne Gentry have become part of the “Science Team”. However, they will still continue to do some work in getting information to growers. Col Douglas (QDPI) will be doing some pulse agronomy work in addition to his breeding work.
- b) Development of dryland soybean varieties with a focus on coastal and inland growing regions.  
Dr Andrew James (CSIRO) provided a written report to the RAC and the report was tabled at the meeting. Regarding dryland soybean varieties Dr James wrote:  
*In answer to the specific question relating to dryland soybeans for somewhat drier environments such as the South Burnett, Darling Downs and the slopes of NSW east of the Newell Hwy; there is currently no active breeding for these targets. We do however have material suited for varietal evaluation in these regions sitting in our seed store and consider that there are traits of potential utility for these environments that could be used in varietal improvement.*
- c) Critical need to continue with mung bean pre-breeding program past 2010.  
Dr Williams reported that QDPI is committed to the current mung bean project, and that commitment is likely to continue while yield gains are available.  
Col Douglas provided a written report to the RAC, and the report was tabled at the meeting.
- d) Chemical registration and minor use permits are essential for pulses.  
It was agreed to ask Gordon Cumming (Pulse Australia) for an update at the next RAC meeting.
- e) Evaluate existing navy bean and azuki lines with a view to commercially releasing acceptable or improved lines.  
Dr George and BGA are currently evaluating some navy bean lines.  
A question arose as to what work NSW I&I are doing with azukis and other grain legumes.

**10.2. Review Priority Issues Paper for SEQ**

The SEQ priority issues were reviewed and updated.

Some additional points of discussion included:

- Fleabane and Feathertop Rhodes grass are difficult to manage in the region. This is not helped by the Regional Council’s practice of spraying around roadside guide posts, which effectively creates a nursery for these weeds.  
*Action item:* write to AgForce to ask them to follow up on the issue with Council.
- Supporting the registration of 2,4-DB for post-emergence weed control in important grain legume crops was promoted to a high priority classification.  
*Action item:* write to the QDPI weeds group (Steve Walker as the leader and Vicki Osten as the researcher working in this field) about the RAC’s priority issues in relation to weeds, and to see if they can assist with a solution for this particular Priority Issue (#17).

*Action item:* write to Nufarm about Priority Issue #17 – to discuss a process for registering 2,4-DB for post-emergence weed control in important grain legume crops.

- *Action item:* write to Kevin Bodner: (i) asking about the current status of minor use permits in pulse crops; and (ii) requesting clarification regarding which herbicides can be used with shielded sprayers when spraying in-crop.
- Crop Management Notes in hardcopy form (Priority Issue #21) have been a priority for the past ten years, but there has been no action on the matter. Growers and consultants understand that the Crop Management Notes contribute to farm productivity, and point to NSW I&I's summer and winter crop management publications as further evidence of the value to the grains sector of this type of publication.

*Action item:* write to Minister Mulherin raising this issue with him, especially in the context of the Fresh Approach for Service Delivery. Include a copy of the NSW publication in the letter to the Minister.

### **10.3. Top 3 issues for the SEQ region**

- I. Crop nutrition limitations and soil health.
- II. Crop management notes in hardcopy.
- III. Pulse breeding (including peanuts).

## **11. RAC nominees' reports**

Mr Taylor (GRDC) reported to the meeting on points including:

- Changes in the way the GRDC sees the grains RD&E pathway.
- How the GRDC Northern Panel sets priorities and develops projects.
- GRDC's new Farming Systems model for delivering RD&E (e.g. GOA- or NGA-style arrangements for Queensland).

Dr Williams (QDPI) reported on a number of QDPI projects:

- The contract for NVT is being finalized with GRDC, and starting this year, QDPI will be responsible for wheat, barley, durum and chickpea NVT trials in Queensland.
- QDPI has submitted tenders to GRDC to undertake crown rot, root lesion nematode and yellow spot screening services.
- QDPI is involved in a number of grain crop pre-breeding projects.
- QDPI is a participant in the Cooperative Research Centre for National Plant Biosecurity.

Dr George (UQ) reported on his work (in conjunction with BGA) on a navy bean reselection project, directed at reselecting the variety Spearfelt.

Dr Fitt (CSIRO) provided a written report to the RAC and the report was tabled at the meeting.

Dr Jensen (GRFL) reported on GRFL activities including:

- Correspondence between GRFL and AGT regarding wheat breeding for Queensland (tabled).
- Co-hosting (with CFI) a Northern Region grains RD&E industry forum in Toowoomba on 22 April.
- The resignation of the GRFL Executive Officer, effective 16 April.

## **12. Next meeting**

Date: 26 August, 2010 (to be confirmed)

Venue: Kingaroy

Speakers: to be advised.

## **13. Closure**

Meeting closed at 4:50pm