

***National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee Meeting  
June 2, 2006  
Ames, Iowa***

***In attendance:***

Lee Sommers (CO- SAES), Chair  
Ann Marie Thro (CSREES)  
Ed Kaleikau (CSREES)  
B. S. Benepal (CSREES)  
Peter Bretting (ARS- National Program Staff)  
Ken Grafton (ND- SAES)  
Dwayne Buxton (ARS – Pacific West Area)  
Candice Gardner (ARS – Ames)  
Jerry Arkin (GA-SAES)  
Tom Fretz (ED-NERA)

***Minutes from the June 2 NPGCC meeting:*** The NPGCC met face-to-face on June 2 in Ames, Iowa in conjunction with the Plant Genetic Resources Conference. Tasks that were defined, as outputs that should be forthcoming from this meeting of the NPGCC were the following:

- Develop an agenda for the upcoming Experiment Station Section (ESS) meetings, September 24-27 in Lake Tahoe, NV. The NPGCC will have 90 minutes to make a presentation to the experiment station directors on the National Plant Germplasm System and to offer any recommendations to this body for consideration.
- Develop recommendations for the enhancement and improvement of our National Plant Germplasm System that can be conveyed to the Experiment Station Directors, ARS and CSREES.
- Consider how the NPGCC will broaden participation with industry in future meetings.

Drs. Peter Bretting (ARS) and Ann Marie Thro (CSREES) presented overviews of their respective agency commitments and programs in Plant Genetic Resources. (**See attached PowerPoint presentations for background**).

The NPGCC also had a teleconference presentation from Dr. Randy Woodson, chair of the *Peer Assessment of 5-Year Performance of ARS National Program 301: Plant, Microbial and Insect Genetic Resources, Genomics and Genetic Improvement*. (**See attached PowerPoint presentation for reference**).

By way of background, below find the mission, vision, goals and objectives statements for the NPGCC.

***Mission of the NPGCC:*** The NPGCC was organized to provide a mechanism for enhancing SAES/ESCOP, USDA/ARS, and USDA/CSRES cooperation and communication in supporting the National Plant Germplasm System's efforts to conserve and provide plant genetic resources and associated information needed for current and future crop research and development that underpins the U.S. agricultural system.

***Vision for the NPGCC:*** The NPGCC has as a vision the task of promoting a stronger, more efficient, more widely-recognized and better utilized National Plant Germplasm System.

***Goals:*** As the NPGCC initiated its activities it has defined the goals and objectives it wishes to achieve.

- To facilitate the coordination of ARS, CSREES and SAES planning and assessment mechanism for NPGS policy, organization, operations and support
- To promote awareness and understanding of the NPGS across ARS, CSREES, and SAES and more broadly to the scientific community
- To serve as a vehicle for improving communications and discussions about issues impacting the NPGS with ARS, SAES, and CSREES

***Objectives:***

- Assess, develop and recommend to the SAES directors, ARS and CSREES strategies for improved coordination of NPGS activities
- Develop and recommend to the SAES directors, ARS and CSREES a process for improved communication of the value of the NPGS
- Initiate a strategic planning effort for the NPGS to better define and communicate the vision, mission and short- and long-term goals.
- Evaluate the current funding models for the NPGS and report findings to the SAES directors, ARS and CSREES

***Recommendations:*** Following much discussion focused around the overview presentations of P. Bretting, A. M. Thro and R. Woodson, the NPGCC will make the following recommendations to the directors for their consideration. The NPGCC agrees that the NPGS must be nurtured, enhanced and improved both in the nature and size of the collections and in the fiscal commitment to maintaining, conserving and enhancing the collections that are national priorities.

1. The NPGCC had the opportunity to be briefed on the recently completed Retrospective Review of ARS Program 301 and supports the recommendations in the full report. Specifically, we want to draw the following recommendations to the attention of the SAES directors for consideration.
  - a. After careful review of the Retrospective Review of ARS Program 301 – the NPGCC supports the recommendation that ARS develop a strategic plan for the Nation's germplasm collections that address customer needs. The NPGCC recommends that the development of any strategic plan for

the Nations plant germplasm collections be done in collaboration with the SAES's. Improved communication between ARS, CSREES and the SAES's is critical to the development of any strategic plan that will address these collections, their development, utilization and conservation in the future.

- b. The NPGCC also supports the recommendation that came forth in the Retrospective Review of ARS Program Area 301 that ARS assume a greater leadership strategy to safeguard the plant, microbe and insect collections.
  - c. The NPGCC endorses the recommendation from the retrospective report that ARS with its partners, CSREES and the SAES's develop and implement a strategy for conserving critical germplasm and genomic collections. Decisions made regarding specific germplasm and genomic collections should be made in collaboration with the SAES's. This may require the establishment of a new joint committee or task force that focuses its full effort on this matter.
  - d. The NPGCC supports the recommendation that ARS with its partners works toward a replacement for the GRIN system to ensure compatibility with other emerging genetic databases, and takes into account the needs for the users of the National Plant Germplasm System. We recommend that ARS establish a timetable and a task force to begin to evaluate the process of replacing the GRIN system with a more contemporary model.
2. The NPGCC recommends that a joint effort with CSREES and the SAES's be engaged to develop a public communications and marketing strategy to better address and publicize the inherent value to the nation and to the public and the value of these collections to our national security.
  3. The NPGS is critically important to both the US and World Agriculture. The SAES contribution to the system is critical, but minimal in the overall scheme, yet public sector scientists, primarily the Land Grant University's, are the largest single user of the materials in the collections (28% of the annual requests for germplasm come from the public sector). While we find that the present system of funding for the 4 regional research plant introduction stations via the regional trust accounts, and the use of NRSP off-the-top funding for NRSP-6 unusual, we believe that it is appropriate. In fact we suggest that the directors reconsider their present stance on reducing the funding for NRSP-6. After searching for an alternative to the present funding mechanism, the NPGCC would suggest that we retain the present system that recognizes the commitment of each region to one of the regional plant introductions stations, and the system as a whole to the NRSP-6. If an alternative is to be considered, the NPGCC would offer the following:

- a. Development of a formulaic mechanism for funding the 4 regional centers and NRSP with a single annual off-the-top commitment. We would propose a system, yet to be determined, that would have two components, similar in fashion to the assessment that is used to support the ED's and their offices in each of the regional research associations. That is, an equal dollar commitment from each station coupled with a percentage commitment based on the Hatch distribution. Details will need to be determined and a plan full developed, if the directors wish to consider such a proposal. This would also require that the 4 regional Germplasm centers plus NRSP-6 develop a unified 5-year budget for submission and consideration.
4. The NPGCC recommends that the NRI enhance and/or increase opportunities to accelerate research on the utilization of materials in the NPGS collections. This should translate to increased funding for genetic characterization and applied genomics for crop improvement.

File: USB/NPGCC/ 070706 NPGCC draft report and recommendations

***DATE: 07/07/06***