

National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee (NPGCC) Notes

June 9 - 10, 2014

USDA George Washington Carver Center, Beltsville, MD

Attendees: Tom Burr, Peter Bretting, Jim Moyer, Ann Marie Thro, Gan-Yuan Zhong, David Baltensperger (by phone), Eric Young, Tim Cupka, Jerry Arkin, Joe Colletti (by phone), and Dan Upchurch

Guests: Michelle Esch, Andrew Hammond, Steve Shafer, Kay Simmons, and Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Dorrie Main

1. ARS Report ([P. Bretting see powerpoint](#))

- Accessions in NPGS up to ~560,000 in 2013
- Germplasm demand ~ 250,000 samples (333,000 in '12)
- Total ARS budget for NPGS 2014 44.8 Million
- October '13 furlough did not cause any loss in collections
- FAO Int. Treaty on Plant Genetic Res. For Food & Agriculture
 - Covers most major food crops, except soybeans, tomato, and peanut
 - Establishes system for exchange under uniform rules
 - Maintains conservation and encourages benefit-sharing
 - Most countries have signed and ratified, but not US, China, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and a few other nations.
 - Seed industry is strong advocates and Obama administration supports ratification
 - Senate needs to provide advice-and-consent for ratification
 - US is signatory, but not a party because it hasn't been ratified, so US can't enter discussions on any proposed changes
 - Some transfer terms are a problem, but we can't help change if not a party
 - Senate staff to be briefed this Thursday by ARS, USAID, FAS, and State Dept
 - Senate has a general problem with multi-lateral treaties
 - Don't want it to go for a vote unless sure it will pass
 - Senate Foreign Relations Committee is key at this point
- International partnerships are becoming more extensive and stronger
 - CGIAR genebanks
 - Global Crop Diversity Trust
 - Canadian, Mexican and Columbian, China genebank personnel training at NPGS facilities

2. Regional Intro Stations ([G.-Y. Zhong; see powerpoint](#))

- Starting to look at accessions distributed per request because it indicates how well-focused the request is relative to the total collection

3. NIFA (A.-M. Thro)

- AFRI- Plant Breeding for Ag Production
 - 2014 proposals are in
 - 126 letters, 96 proposals, fund ~10
- Interest in plant breeding in past couple of years from stakeholders has increased a lot
- Need to report monthly on variety releases supported by NIFA funds
- Need to track NPGS accessions used in varieties released

4. ARS Transgene Procedures and Practices ([D. Upchurch; see handout](#))

- The document focuses on cotton, maize, soybeans, alfalfa, and sugar beets
- Document is now in internal review in ARS, comments are in and will be incorporated into the document
- External review will likely occur sometime this summer
- Procedures and practices will apply to ARS genebanks and ARS breeding stocks
- Testing procedures are still not determined; waiting for external input on details
- External review will be done by numerous public, private, and industry stakeholders involved with germplasm
- It's impossible to guarantee zero presence of transgenes for such crops
- Industry is strongly behind this policy to be implemented in the public sector
- NPGS needs help from industry to ensure appropriate testing by providing information on testing parameters and assistance with defraying the cost.

5. USDA Plant Breeding Working Group (A.-M. Thro)

- ARS, FS, NIFA, ERS, NRCS form working group to oversee department's effort related to plant breeding
- Currently working on a Plant Breeding Road Map that should be out for review in couple months

6. National Genetics Resources Advisory Committee ([M. Esch and P. Bretting; see handout](#))

- Second meeting was in Ft. Collins and focused on AC21 recommendations
- Developed a response to the AC21 report recommendation

- Primary recommendations are
 - NPGS needs to continue making non-GE accessions available
 - NPGS needs to maintain original genetic identity of accessions
- Recommended that cost of testing germplasm should be shared by industry
- The NGRAC is currently filling 4 vacant positions, 3 science and 1 general public
- Next meeting in late July or August

7. ASTA (T. Cupka)

- Pushing for \$72 Million in ARS funding for NPGS
- Goal is to reduce volatility of US food supply
- If can't increase federal funding then would like NPGCC to help identify priority areas
 - At risk collections
 - Key commodities
 - Etc.
- Seed industry needs the NPGS germplasm and information on the accessions; e. g., genotype, GM traits, virus presence, stress tolerance
- ASTA employs a lobbying firm to push favorable federal legislation and budget lines
- National Sorghum Check-off Board invited a targeted proposal from S-9 that went thru their normal competitive process and was awarded. First time a targeted proposal for germplasm curation was invited by a group like that
- Other industry groups might be open to similar targeted proposal more than general germplasm support
- Industry is currently genotyping all new accessions they receive, so different companies are genotyping same accessions
- Companies could help fund the NPGS to do "chip" genotyping for one accession lot to certify its type.
- ASTA could coordinate the companies' support for this process
- Genotyping would be conducted by one or more private labs contracted to do this
- If a lot is regenerated then it would be genotyped again

8. NAPB (D. Baltensperger)

- Still very active with numerous subcommittees
- Meeting in Minneapolis, MN in August, includes a strategic planning effort prior to meeting
- Plant Breeding Coordinating Committee (SCC-80) is associated with NAPB and will plan for next 5-year proposal

- SCC-80 has a unique role in interacting with ARS & NIFA

9. Crop Genomics Database NRSP Proposal ([D. Main: see powerpoint & proposal](#))

- Database will be sustained long term by industry support and user fees
- ARS could take on this type of database if funding were available

10. ARS Update (Chavonda Jacobs-Young)

- FY'14 ARS budget restored to pre-sequestration levels, plus some extra targeted funds
- Restored funds were used primarily for high priority, ARS unique areas, which included NPGS
- Concerned about personnel pipeline to fill vacancies from retirement
- Working on ARS travel restrictions
 - New rules and exemptions
 - Travel to professional meetings now considered professional development and are ok
 - Travel supported by non-appropriated funds (e.g., grants) no longer count against the ARS Agency travel cap.
 - NIFA grant panel and compliance review travel is no longer included in agency travel cap calculation
- Reorganization of Area offices
 - Consolidation from 8 ARS Areas to 5 ARS Areas, combined areas are -
 - South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic= Southeast Area
 - Beltsville and North Atlantic= Northeast Area
 - Southern Plains and Northern Plains=Great Plains Area

11. NPGCC Chair

- Tom Burr is stepping down as chair end of 2014
- Jim Moyer has agreed to be chair starting January 2015

12. Next NPGCC Meeting

- College Station, TX in June, David Baltensperger and ARS-College Station to host, visit cotton and pecan germplasm collections