

Soil Association

Horticulture Standards Committee

11.00am 8th July 2009, Bristol

Minutes

Present: Jill Vaughan (Chair), Jenny Usher, Tim Deane, Matthew Murton, Karen Shergold, Adrian Izzard.

Staff: Francis Blake, Chris Atkinson, Ken Hayes, Peter Melchett, Ben Raskin, Rob George, Ric Bowers, Flo Kirk-Lloyd, Lucy Murton.

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

Apologies: Roger Hitchings, Margi Lennartsson, Anne Evans, Phil Morley, Alan Turner.

2. Protected cropping standards

2.1 Background

The chair introduced the subject referring to the various initiatives on glasshouse standards that had happened in recent years. Most papers referred to permanent structures, ie not Spanish tunnels, but there was agreement to include all protected cropping.

2.2 Key issues - what should the standards cover

The committee considered the range of issues that the green paper should cover.

Rotations – the standards already contained some outcome-based indications regarding rotations, and it might be possible to develop a standard that focussed more on the outcome than prescriptions. The consultation should explore if this approach was viable and sufficient.

Soil – there was general agreement that production should be soil-based, but the consultation should explore exactly where the line should be drawn.

Crop nutrition – the consultation should explore if (and why) there should be nutrient limits, if so how it should be measured and what limits, ie what was the standard trying to achieve and how should it do this.

Climate change and energy – the consultation should ask about the acceptability of using fossil fuels (or requiring renewable energy) for heating, lighting, CO₂ enrichment and pumping, if organic protected cropping is to claim to be sustainable. The consultation should ask if licensees would support a requirement to use 'green' tariff electricity.

CO₂ enrichment – the key question was not whether to allow enrichment, but what energy source was acceptable.

Water use – the existing standards for responsible water use covered this; the key remaining question was management of run-off, especially from Spanish and French tunnels.

Soil sterilisation – the consultation should ask what types of soil sterilisation/pasteurisation were acceptable and under what conditions or for what reasons.

Buildings – the consultation should ask if the SA should get involved in deciding on the siting of protected structures (especially those not needing planning permission) and the extent to which we should assess environmental impact on eg erosion.

3. Minutes of meeting of 10/09/08

The minutes were approved.

4. Any other business

It was reported that the regulation had changed from allowing 'flame weeding' to 'thermal methods of weed control'. The committee asked for a paper on the subject of changing the standards to the new wider definition.

4.4 Cell fusion techniques

The committee noted the declaration from a recent meeting of the European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding in Paris but decided for the moment to retain the position it had already taken on the issue in October 2006.

5. Date of next meeting

No date was set for the next meeting – to be decided when the timing of the consultation was known.