

THE ACCEPTABLE CROP CULTIVAR SCHEME IN NEW ZEALAND

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INTRODUCTION

With New Zealand's participation in the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) scheme for the varietal certification of herbage seed moving in international trade, and the requirements placed on our seed in trading with European Community countries, it became obvious that procedures for listing of our herbage cultivars would have to be introduced. By doing this two purposes would be achieved. Firstly it would keep those associated with the seed industry informed of the New Zealand and overseas cultivars recommended for use in this country. Secondly, it would limit herbage seed imports to only those varieties which would qualify for inclusion on the schedule – thus effecting a form of "quality control" of seed imports in line with similar procedures overseas.

A list of herbage cultivars was drawn up on the recommendations of a technical committee and included in the list were New Zealand bred and regional cultivars eligible for O.E.C.D. certification as at April 1971. In addition to the New Zealand cultivars the list included those overseas varieties which, at that time, could be imported under the Stock Food and Agricultural Seeds Import Regulations, on a general consent basis.

Following the establishment of the acceptable list for herbage cultivars it was agreed that a similar procedure be introduced for cereal and other agricultural crop seeds. An Acceptable Crop Cultivar Committee was formed. It is a three man committee with two representatives coming from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and one from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research; the chairman being one of the Ministry representatives.

CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTABILITY

In instigating a scheme for the listing of acceptable crop cultivars it was recognised that two requirements would be necessary.

In the first instance the cultivars to be included in the initial list should be those which were considered to be of economic importance to New Zealand and they covered varieties of wheat, oats, barley, maize, kale, rape, swedes and turnips. The first list was based to a great extent on those cultivars already in certification.

The second stage which had to be considered was when new cultivars and new species were to be added to the list following testing procedures. A cultivar to be brought on to the acceptable schedule must display superior performance in some character of importance not present in similar cultivars already on

the schedule. When a new crop specie is to be listed some indication of the area to be grown should be supplied to give an indication of the crop's economic worth.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Any breeder or his agent may apply to have a cultivar tested for listing on the schedule of acceptable crop cultivars, and should follow these procedures:

- (a) Applications to be made to the Farm Advisory Officer (Seeds) Christchurch by 1 April for autumn sowings and 1 July for spring sowings. is required with the application.
- (c) Some data on performance in New Zealand and overseas in relation to yield, quality of product, maturity, disease and insect resistance should be supplied.
- (d) The place the cultivar could have in New Zealand agriculture is to be recorded, along with any special features it may have.
- (e) The application should also state whether the cultivar has undergone some primary testing in the country of origin.

TESTING PROCEDURES

The cultivars are tested in two stages.

In the first stage testing is carried out in small plot trials which are evaluated by the crop evaluation section of the Crop Research Department. Before further testing is carried out the committee must be satisfied that the cultivar shows promise at stage one.

Second stage testing is undertaken by the Soil and Field Research Organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on a national basis. The testing is organised on a co-operative basis between the Ministry and farmers which allows the cultivar to be tried over a wide range of climate and soil types. Stage two testing is undertaken for a period of two years; so if a cultivar is under test for the full time a period of three years will pass before it will be accepted or rejected.

However, there can be some flexibility in the procedure. Stage one testing could be omitted and the committee could recommend the cultivar be accepted for stage two evaluation. In this case the information with the application would have to indicate that the variety has the potential for full listing. On the other hand the committee can decline an application particularly if it considers insufficient information has been presented with the application.

NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

The Breeder or his agent is advised of the interim results and if the cultivar is required to undergo further testing additional seed supplies are requested at this stage. In presenting the results all cultivars are named along with the variety which is being used as the standard. The final results are advised in a similar manner but with the additional information as to whether or not the cultivar will be recommended for listing.

PROCEDURES OF FINAL ACCEPTANCE

When the committee is in the situation of recommending a cultivar for listing it notifies the Director-General of Agriculture of its intention. At this stage, comments on the recommendation are called for from the Agricultural Produce Section of Federated Farmers and the New Zealand Agricultural Merchants Federation. As soon as these comments are available and the organisations agree to the recommendation the cultivar is added to the acceptable list and on acceptance automatically becomes eligible for certification.

Effect of Acceptable Listing on Seed Import

Although seed imports are restricted to those cultivars which have been listed no limit is placed on the amount of seed which can be imported of these listed varieties. By allowing the importation of those cultivars on the acceptable list New Zealand is showing reciprocity in seed trading which is an important factor when dealing with European Community Countries. However any imported seed is subject to the normal plant health and quarantine requirements as gazetted in the Stock Food and Agricultural Seeds Import Regulations.

Overseas Comparison

When New Zealand introduced the acceptable crop and herbage cultivar schemes the adopted criteria was considered satisfactory for its needs, and it is anticipated that they will form the basis for the crop and herbage schemes for some time. In most of the European countries however, their listing is carried out under the term of **National Lists** with the standards being based on **distinctness, uniformity and stability** (D.U.S.), as well as some recognition for agronomic worth. Under these circumstances and where a plant varieties rights scheme is in operation the data from one series of tests are able to be used for two purposes. Mr Ritchie describes the overseas situation in his paper.

Now that New Zealand is involved in Plant Varieties Rights D.U.S. standards could be included, at some future date, in the criteria for acceptable listing.