

**Minutes of PestNet Moderators Meeting  
30 August 2003  
MAF, Wellington, New Zealand**

**Attendance**

Moderators: Mat Porea, Bob Macfarlane, Wilco Liebrechts, Grahame Jackson.

Apologies: Banpot Napompeth declined the invitation to attend the meeting.

**Confirmation of Minutes**

The draft minutes of the meeting of 22 January 2002 were approved, subject to minor spelling and grammatical amendments.

**Matters Arising**

**2003-04 Board Membership**

It was noted that during the year, Yee Wah Sing had resigned as a Board member, and was not replaced.

**2003-04 Moderators**

Banpot Napompeth was elected as moderator for Asia, and Mat Porea relinquished his position as moderator, but remains a Board member.

**Constitution**

It was noted that the Constitution contains anomalies, eg the appointment and role of Board members and moderators are unclear (see Article 12), and these need to be clarified.

It was agreed that the Chairman would review the Constitution and email moderators to discuss possible amendments. The Secretary will check with the Registrar of Titles, Fiji, to see if the name of the organization has been changed from 'Pacific PestNet' to 'PestNet'.

**Chairman's Report**

This is the first time that the moderators have met face-to-face since the meeting of 21 November 2000 on Treasure Island, Nadi, Fiji. The last meeting of moderators was conducted online on 23 January 2002. It was noted that a number of changes have occurred over the past 18 months, including:

- The name of the organization was changed from 'Pacific PestNet' to 'PestNet'
- PestNet has expanded to Asia in collaboration with AFFA

- An awareness programme has been carried out: the website was launched, and brochures, posters and fridge magnets were produced
- Membership increased from about 340 to around 460
- PestNet was one of 16 grantees (out of 259 entries) that was successful in obtaining *infoDev* funding from the World Bank for the project: *Linking farmers to plant protection networks (Solomon Islands)*

Challenges for PestNet over the next 3-5 years include:

- Increase contact with plant protection agencies, universities etc in Asia
- Extend contact with farmers, farmers' organizations and NGOs in the Pacific
- Maintain sufficient expertise in PestNet to cater to a growing membership in the Asia and Pacific regions

## **Secretary/Treasurer's Report**

The financial position of PestNet over the past 18 months included the following revenue:

- FJ\$422.34 from ICT Update for an article about PestNet
- FJ\$9722.61 and FJ\$9273.56 from the AusAID/AFFA project: *Plant health information exchange network for South East Asia and the Pacific*, funded under the APEC Support Program. These amounts were for: a) visit to Canberra by moderators Wilco Liebrechts and Grahame Jackson to discuss the project with AFFA staff, and to design/plan the PestNet website, brochures, posters and fridge magnets; and b) consultancy services in connection with the development of the website, including compilation of plant protection resources and the photo gallery.

A sum of AUD1840.0 (FJ\$2167.7) was repaid to PestNet for website hosting by Web Central, Canberra. This money will be used to pay for a new website hosting, possibly through a firm in Fiji.

Over the past 18 months, PestNet incurred the following expenses:

- FJ\$10849 for fees (18 days at FJ\$500/day), airfares and per diem (including visit to Canberra) from the AusAID/AFFA funds for two moderators
- FJ\$41.51 for the distribution of brochures, posters and fridge magnets to PestNet members
- FJ\$399.21 for administration requirements (eg domain name registration, telephone, fax, taxis etc)
- FJ\$1254 for per diems and ticket taxes for five days each for two moderators to attend the Wellington meeting (August 2003)
- FJ\$ 44.97 for bank fees

## **Operating Guidelines**

### **Fee and Per Diem Structure for PestNet Business**

A possible fee and per diem structure for moderators (and members) in carrying out PestNet business was discussed. It was agreed that PestNet would retain 20 per cent of fees over US\$200; 10 per cent of fees between US\$100 and 200; and zero per cent below US\$100. These arrangements will apply prospectively.

It was noted that as a consequence of the above, the fee to moderators for work done under the AusAID/AFFA project would be FJ\$500, resulting in a total fee of FJ\$9000 for 18 days. A more modest fee, between US\$100 to 120 a day, would be made for work on the World Bank/Solomon Islands project.

A comparison was made between paying a set per diem and payment on an “actual and reasonable” basis, ie a reimbursement of expenses based on receipts submitted for airfare, accommodation, food and incidentals (taxi fares, phone calls, etc). The NZAID Pacific per diem rates were tabled, and it was decided that in future, a per diem at 80 per cent of the NZAID rate would be payable to moderators and members doing PestNet work. This amount would include costs for food and incidentals (ie ground transport: taxis or mileage to and from airports, phone calls, etc).

Based on the above, the following per diems are payable:

- For the Canberra visits in October 2002, a per diem of FJ\$155 will be provided (and taxis, taxes, etc will be reimbursed)
- For the Wellington meeting of moderators (August 2003), a per diem of NZ\$200 per day for five days will be paid to the two moderators from Fiji and Australia. This amount would cover food and incidentals (ie ground transport – taxis or mileage to and from airports – phone calls, etc). It was agreed in this instance only that air ticket taxes will be reimbursed. Any additional expenses claimed will need to be accompanied by receipts and justified in writing, and reimbursement will be subject to agreement by all moderators.

It was noted that in future, the PestNet account will not be used for personal loans.

The Chairman will look into registering for online banking and setting out PestNet finances in a conventional accounting format.

### **AFFA/APEC Project**

The AusAID/AFFA project: *Plant health information exchange network for South East Asia and the Pacific*, funded under the APEC Support Program, has terminated, and AFFA has sent AusAID a report on its activities and outcomes. Since the website was launched, and promotional materials distributed in March, the membership of PestNet have increased by about 80 persons. These are mostly from Asian countries. However, the moderators did not know who these people were, or the institutions to which they

belonged, as most had hotmail or yahoo addresses. There was a need to find out more about these members: who they were; why they had joined; how they found out about PestNet, and, importantly, their expertise. A survey needs to be done. These new members should be contacted and asked to provide information about themselves. The Chairman and Secretary were asked to do this as soon as practicable.

The website was hosted by ZOO, the company that did the design work, in association with Web Central. AFFA paid for 2 years hosts from the APEC support program funds. In July ZOO wrote to PestNet saying that this arrangement would terminate, and that a refund would be made to PestNet, which would then need to decide whether it wished to have the site hosted by Web Central or another provider. The monthly hosting fee of Web Central is A\$87. This was considered in access of PestNet's resources, especially as there are cheaper sites available in Fiji. It was decided to transfer the site to Blue Ocean for two years at a cost of about FJ\$600.

There was concern about the long-term hosting of the website and the associated costs, especially as PestNet does not have a regular income source. The Chairman will again enquire whether the website can be hosted free of charge by HEAR, University of Hawaii. Discussion of website hosting also raised the issue of the need to archive the messages sent to PestNet. It was decided that all the messages should be downloaded to CD Rom each month.

## **World Bank/Solomon Islands**

The Chairman outlined the status of the project, including relationships with partners and the outcomes of the visit to Solomon Islands by the Chairman, 24 July to 12 August 2003. The last week of October is the ideal time for the next visit by the Chairman and Secretary, coinciding with the availability of Tony Jansen, KGA. The Community Field Officer will be trained, pest and disease surveys carried out in north Malaita, complimented by PRAs to understand their impact on farmers' livelihoods, and decisions made by farmers (the Baetolau Farmers Network) on which major pests and/or diseases to control in village trials, and to monitor with advice from PestNet members.

There may be a problem with dates, as the last week of October has been tentatively scheduled for a visit to the Caribbean to advise Cari/PestNet on a service similar to PestNet. However, the moderators concluded that priority has to be given to the Solomon Island project, and that the PestNet team should make every effort to arrive in Solomon Islands on 23 October 2003. SPC will be asked if they wished to participate in the project, covering transport costs and extension materials in particular. The Secretary will consult with the SPC Plant Protection Service Extension Officer about this.

## **FAO/TCP (including AGRIS/CARIS)**

PestNet will carry out a contractual services agreement under the project. This will include the following activities:

- Help organise 2 workshops (on farmers' perceptions of pests and disease and Ecoport) in Fiji, each of 1 week duration;
- In-country training in 14 FAO PIC Member countries on pest diagnostics, digital photography and the use of web and CD Rom based diagnostic and taxonomic tools;
- Updating of pests lists for various countries.

It was noted that PestNet are being sent AGRIS/CARIS CD-ROMs from FAO. However, they can only be used in a Windows environment and the Chairman uses an Apple Macintosh computer. The Chairman has purchased Virtual PC so that the CD-ROMs can be used on a Macintosh, but is no longer used because it requires a substantial amount of hard drive. The issue was unresolved; the only solution being to access the databases on-line.

### **CARI/PestNet**

PestNet has helped CARI/PestNet obtain funds to develop an email service on plant protection for the Caribbean. It wrote the project document that was submitted to CTA and which obtained €25,000 to start the service. This will be used for website development, and for a visit by PestNet moderators to share experiences with scientists from Caribbean countries. It is envisaged that CARI/PestNet will be a separate service to PestNet, but moderators will cross-post relevant messages.

### **Pacific Islands Distance Diagnostics and Recommendation System**

Funding for this diagnostic system is being provided by ADAP, through its assistance to Landcare centres. Equipment is being provided so that pests and diseases can be photographed and the images emailed for identification. The University of Georgia, USA, is providing the software for the service under licence. PestNet is happy to help PIDDRS, and that it would be best if messages were put out on PestNet so that diagnosticians could respond. PestNet should not alter its present way of operating to accommodate PIDDRS.

### **Databases/Cataloguing Images**

It was agreed that PestNet will support Ecoport and that images held by PestNet will, if possible, be added to the database. Under the FAO TCP project, images will be added to Ecoport if they are of good quality and if they have been identified correctly.

It was decided that images appearing on PestNet will continue to be put on the photo gallery, and when identified offered to Ecoport. However, there are increasing numbers of images taken by the moderators that they feel should be stored in some form to make them available to all that might want to access them. One option is to collaborate with ADAP, which is considering setting up a Pacific repository of images. The Chairman will continue the dialogue with ADAP on this matter.

The HortNet key was discussed. For each crop, there are a series of linked images allowing people with limited taxonomic experience to identify the major pests. The

Secretary reported that countries in the region thought a similar key for major Pacific Island crops would be useful. Extension agents, students and farmers might use the Key. It could be used for quarantine purposes, perhaps early warning of breaches. There was no reason why the Key could not be used globally with appropriate content. The idea would be to start with three or four crops initially. One of the advantages of the system was that there was no need for sophisticated software; the system was simple, and might even be added to (or linked to) the PestNet website.

It was remarked that PestNet moderators would welcome access to the CABI pest database. The Chairman would ask the CABI Plant clinic for costs of access.

A book based on the format of Silent Invaders was thought to be useful for the Pacific. AQIS has agreed that the format could be used. There may be duplication between the book and the HortNet key, in that both have a quarantine focus. It was noted that many of the pests figured in the book were relevant to the Pacific. There was need for a new forward and different pest priorities. Although the moderators considered that the book was useful, it would take time to compile, and it was not resolved who might take on the task.

## **Operational Issues**

### **Obligations under the Constitution**

Discussed under Matters Arising.

### **Finding the Taxonomists**

PestNet will contact BioNet INTERNATIONAL to discover the names of taxonomic groups who might be asked to determine pest images when undetermined by PestNet members. A question might also be put out on PestNet to find out if members are aware of special taxonomist groups that might provide on-line identifications. The FAO and British Museum members of PestNet might also be asked.

### **Distribution of Promotional Material**

Approximately 2000 leaflets, 350 posters and 300 fridge magnets have been sent to PestNet members who volunteered to distribute them in their countries. It was decided to review the situation in 6 months before asking members to do more.

### **Moderating**

There have been a few occasions when the moderators have posted messages that were too large or when messages approved by one moderator when another was trying to edit them (eg discuss content or reduce the size of an image). This caused confusion. It was decided that Bob Macfarlane would continue to moderate messages sent overnight (New Zealand time was in advance of other moderators), and if there were questions on content or size/quality of images, he would notify the Grahame Jackson to do what was necessary.

### **Bouncing PestNet Emails**

Periodically, moderators have been downloading the list of bouncing PestNet emails from the Yahoogroups website and sending these to the addresses listed. On the last occasion on 23 August, there were 134 bouncing emails. It was decided to delete the addresses of those that were returned to the moderators as being inoperable. For some, the moderators know of the new address of the former PestNet members, and for these invitations to will be sent.

### **Website**

New pages need to be added to give details of the PestNet projects (eg *infoDev*, and FAO/TCP) and summaries of progress. The Secretary was asked to get costings from Blue Ocean for these additional pages. The Chairman will write the text for uploading to the website.

### **PestNet Priorities 2003-04**

The question was asked: “five years from now where do the moderators want PestNet to be?” Most importantly, all thought that PestNet should still be in existence! To ensure this, PestNet will need to meet a number of challenges in both the Pacific and Asia regions. In the Pacific, the service should be expanded to incorporate NGOs (PIANGO needs to be reminded), schools and churches. In Asia, there were still opportunities to increase membership among government agencies. However, expansion of the service outside those regions was not a goal. It would be difficult to do, as PestNet would not have knowledge of the resource persons who might assist.

As email becomes common within the Pacific, in urban as well as rural areas, it will present further opportunities for PestNet to provide the technical backstopping that agriculture extension officers and farmers need and find difficult to obtain at present. In this connection, it was also noted that the Japanese Government has decided to provide funds to UNDP for a PFNet (Solomon Islands) service in two additional Pacific island countries. When these new email networks are established, PestNet will need to ensure that information on its services is distributed to potential users.

### **Other Business**

The lack of a PestNet revenue stream was of concern. One suggestion was to ask agencies to make a small contribution for membership. However, PestNet was grateful to the many institutions that allowed staff to contribute their time to respond to PestNet members’ emails, and did not want to jeopardise this by requesting financial contributions. There were no other ideas of raising funds.

### **Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was left undecided, but it might be possible to use Microsoft chat in, say, 6 months’ time for a short discussion among moderators. Regular, short,

online, meetings should be the aim. Such meetings might be scheduled when the Secretary is transiting Sydney, taking advantage of cheaper, faster, Internet access.