

Minutes of PestNet Moderators Meeting 11-12 March 2006 Lincoln Green Hotel, New Zealand

Attendance

Bob Macfarlane, Grahame Jackson and Wilco Liebrechts

Apologies: Banpot Napompeth, and Mat Porea

Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting, 30 August 2003, were accepted as a true and accurate record of the Wellington meeting.

Matters arising

1. Wilco Liebrechts will check that the name of the 'project' is register in Fiji as PestNet not Pacific PestNet.
2. Awareness in Asia (and Pacific)
 - PestNet has made some efforts to involve Asian members through the attendance of Banpot Napompeth at a number of meetings when leaflets and posters were distributed;
 - DAFF, Australia, is helping to publicise PestNet in Asia, and has kindly given out leaflets, etc;
 - PestNet will also ask S Soetigno (ASIANET) if he wants posters and leaflets to distribute to members;
 - There are people in most Pacific and Asian counties who have joined PestNet; but probably more in-country awareness could be done in Cambodia, Loa and Burma – need to find champions to disseminate info on PestNet;
 - Maybe a need to concentrate on India through Dr YR Sarma, former Director of Indian Institute of Spices Research, Calicut;
 - PestNet could also contact John Hedley, MAF, New Zealand to create awareness in the countries he visits. BM will follow up.

Chairman's Report

This was the first time that the moderators had the opportunity to meet since 30 August 2003 in Wellington. It was unfortunate that only three of the five could attend the meeting.

Since that time, PestNet has expanded from 460 members to 699, 55 of whom are bouncing. Bouncing membership occurs when Yahoo can't send the message, ie it is returned to its server. This can occur for a variety of reasons: the person is no longer using the email address; the server is down, or the receiving server views the PestNet

message as spam. The latter is becoming more frequent as ISPs increase the sensitivity of their filters to stop unwanted emails.

Other matters were briefly noted:

- The project *Linking Farmers to Crop Protection Networks (Solomon Islands)* funded by *infoDev* World Bank was concluded in June this year. There was a participatory evaluation bringing in people from Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Overall the project was useful, if not a resounding success. There were difficulties initially in establishing collaboration between the partners, and awareness creation among the communities around the email station was very slow. Few farmers used the station, but extension agents of both the government and non-government agencies did, and found it useful. It was been decided not to seek further funding for this type of project, although a new project has been written.
- The FAO TCP 2909 *PestNet: Meeting Plant Protection Needs in the 21st Century* has also ended. Two PRA trainings were held, photos of diseases were added to Ecoport, and digital camera training (with cameras) was given in 14 Pacific FAO member countries. Feedback from the countries and especially the participants from the digital camera training suggest that the project was well received. It has not yet resulted in an upsurge of new PestNet members, unfortunately. Recent discussions with the FAO SAPA Representative canvassed the idea of a new project testing the use of mobile telephony.
- PestNet has been requested to enter the Stockholm Challenge, a competition to promote excellence in the use of ICTs or as the website says: *The Stockholm Challenge brings together inspiring people working with ICT from around world in the six categories of the Award. This time around 100 finalists will participate in the Final Event of the Stockholm Challenge 2006.* We are hopeful of being one of them! The submission gave PestNet the chance of asking members about the service, and about 60 replied. All of them were very positive, and this was the first time that PestNet has received feedback. Unfortunately, there were no suggestions as to how we might improve the service or extend to other regions.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer gave the state of the three PestNet accounts. They were as follows:

PestNet FAO/TCP US dollar account: USD12,082.64, with another USD16,000 owed by FAO as the last tranche under the TCP 2909. This will be paid upon receipt of a satisfactory financial report on the use of FAO funds. Outstanding claims: GVHJ, USD17,278.9; and WL, USD13,438.5.

PestNet/World Bank US dollar account: USD8,064.93. However, there were some outstanding payments to be made. USD1,800 to KGA for the Baetolau Farmers' Network; USD1,000 for an audit; USD1,727 to GVHJ for a computer. From this account GVHJ will be reimbursed the monies he has spent for PestNet since August 2003 (AUS3,357.2).

PestNet Fiji dollar account: FD581.82. After completion of the two projects, the accounts will be closed and the funds transferred to the PestNet General account.

Operational issues

1. Changes to the constitution

WL will notify the Registrar of Titles Fiji of the change in the name of the organization. Also, under Aim a small change will be requested. This would then read:

“Aim: The main function of the Organisation is to promote the exchange of and access to information on plant protection and quarantine in Fiji *and the world*, as a contribution to the sustainable development in its broadest interpretation to the long-term benefit and well-being of peoples, countries, societies, communities and their economies at no profit.”

Previously, it was “Fiji and the Pacific Region in general”.

2. Appointment of Board members

It was unanimously agreed that the offices of the Board members be renewed for a further term. Mr. Taholo Kami will be asked if he wishes to continue as a Board member. He was extremely helpful in giving technical direction to PestNet when setting up its operation, and is thanked for that.

Peter Maddison will be asked to be a Board member. He has made an outstanding contribution to PestNet since its inauguration.

3. Operational guidelines of the Management Committee of PestNet

The constitution says that the Board of Trustees is the decision-making body; the management committee is a committee of the moderators.

The draft operational guidelines (Wellington meeting) were reconsidered and changes made (Annex 1).

4. Fees and DSA

When moderators are doing work on behalf of PestNet, 10% of the fee above \$100 (whatever the currency) will be retained by PestNet. DSA will be paid in total (this will vary depending on the organization). For work done for PestNet when there is no project, reimbursements will be made to cover “actual and reasonable” expenses (accommodation, food, taxis, etc).

5. Website hosting and specialist groups

After a long time, the website is up and running. It is hosted with a company in Bangalore, India, and costs about AUD420 per annum. This is considerably cheaper than the Australian charges.

It was pointed out that PestNet could use the HEAR server to host the website as it was now possible to have it registered as "PestNet". But whether or not HEAR operated the Microsoft SLQ database software was unknown. A decision was made to leave the website in India for the time being.

It was noted that there are specialist groups that might like to join PestNet. CocoPest to merge with PestNet, and this was welcomed. WL will follow up.

6. Yahoogroups: messages, summaries and liability

Members should give a précis of the problem, their name and institutions. Some simplified protocols should be sent to members, and added to the website.

There is still an interest to summarise the messages: Kevin Painting at CTA was positive and asked for a small project document. WL did this. A keyword index is needed to access the messages that have been summarised. The Yahoogroups PestNet archive has a lot of valuable information, but the site is accessible to members only.

The problem experienced by PestNet is that the messages can't be downloaded easily. They could be cut and pasted, but this would entail a lot of time. It's possible (and could be done by a student) and then, once done, put into a Word document, summarised and transferred to a database. PestNet needs expert advice on this, and that means it will have to pay for it!

There should be a note on all messages sent via PestNet that the organization is not responsible for the accuracy of the IDs, and cannot be held liable if they are found to be incorrect. The Moderators will look to see if there is a way of doing this. A discretionary statement is also required, saying that IDs from photos on line can never be considered definitive, and that specimens always need to be sent to a taxonomist. Identification on PestNet should not constitute an official record for any country.

It was not thought necessary to insure PestNet against a liability for an incorrect identification or pest management recommendation.

7. Projects, old and new

InfoDev Solomon Islands

PestNet will suggest to PFNet that a message goes to all rural email stations about the service that it provides. Perhaps in future such projects as *Linking farmers* should concentrate on commercial farming.

It was noted that few members of PestNet are from NGOs. The messages on PestNet are mostly from researchers, extensionists and quarantine people, not farmers and

farmers' representatives. The question was asked whether there was a possibility that churches could be more involved?

CariPestNet

The service is up and running and is hosted by CariNet. Pestnet leaves it to CariPestNet to cross-post messages. Two PestNet moderators (WL and GVHJ) are also moderators of CariPestNet.

PIDDRS, Pacific Island Distance Diagnostic and Recommendation System

This is the ADAP funded project on distance diagnosis for the American territories. There has been no collaboration, unfortunately, but PestNet remains ready to cooperate in any way it can.

Africa PestNet

To get the service established, 2-3 enthusiastic people in the region are needed. One idea is to go ahead and set up the service as a private sector initiative – maybe the success of PestNet is because it is outside any existing organization, and has the freedom to operate as it sees best without too many restrictions. There would be a need for volunteers initially.

Should PestNet try and develop the network with other organisations? This would probably mean that funding would be required. If that was so, what would happen later, when the 'project' has ended? Would the moderators be able to sustain the service without external support? It was thought best not to use this model.

Other matters

PestNet camera training for Asia. It is unlikely that this would attract funding for a regional FAO TCP.

Business cards. These were thought necessary, with the PestNet logo on one side and names/addresses on the other. WL will get quotes.

PestNet photo competition. There was agreement that the idea is good, but the type of prize was of concern. Should it be money or, for instance, a camera? The entrants should retain copyright, but allow PestNet the right to put it on its website or use it for other non-profit purposes. Prize should be financial in the short-term.

Pest diagnostics. WL has written to Cocopests and APCC and both are interested in a Hortnet-type identification system for coconut. There is also a need to go to UQ, Brisbane to become familiar with the operation of Lucid.

Next meeting

Due to uncertain finances, no date was fixed.