

PestNet Annual Board Meeting

23/24 January 2002

On-line

Introduction

The PestNet Annual Board Meeting was held on 23/24 January 2002¹. Board members taking part: Mat Porea, Bob Macfarlane, Grahame Jackson (Chair) , Wilco Liebregts (Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from Taholo Kami and Wa Sing.

Proposed agenda and indicative times (Samoa//New Zealand)

08.00 – 09.00	Roll Call – confirmation of participation/attendance.
09.00 – 09.30	Confirmation of minutes of PestNet AGM, November 2000.
09.30 – 12.00	Expansion of PestNet into SE Asia: AFFA/APEC initiative.
12.00 – 14.00	SPC 1) PestNet: Solomon Islands project; 2) other SPC support.
14.00 – 15.00	FAO – PestNet TCP proposal.
15.00 – 17.00	SPREP/PACINET/PestNet.
17.00 – 17.15	Board members and membership details.
17.15 – 17.30	Any other business.

Nominations for Chairperson

Grahame Jackson, Chair of PestNet acted as leader of the on-line meeting.

Item 1: Acceptance of minutes of last Annual Meeting

The Minute of the last Annual Meeting, held on 24 November 2000, Nadi. Fiji, were accepted without amendment.

Item 2: Expansion of PestNet into South East Asia: AFFA/APEC initiative

The Chair outlined the discussions between PestNet and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia to expand PestNet into South East Asia. The request follows a meeting of the AusAID-sponsored *APEC ATCWG Workshop to Contain Transborder Movement of Plant Pests: Diagnostics* (July 2001) to assist regional quarantine and plant health agencies access specialist advice on plant protection and biosecurity issues. The recommendation was to expand PestNet to improve the ability of quarantine services in regional economies to accurately describe the health status of their agricultural industries – improved capacity in this area is of fundamental importance to all economies that seek to trade in agricultural

¹ The numbers are those east of the dateline - for Samoa, and west of the dateline - for New Zealand, Fiji and Australia

commodities. Developing economies in particular face problems in exporting food products because they find it hard to meet the international standards imposed on members of the WTO under the SPS Agreement. If the expansion occurs AFFA and PestNet in association with the ASEANET Secretariat in Malaysia (part of BIONET – International, the Global Network for Taxonomy) will submit a proposal for financial assistance under Round 21 of the APEC Support Program, in order to develop materials for an awareness programme, including a website to serve as a central reference point for plant health information in the region. There will also be funds for a meeting of moderators, AFFA and ASEANET staff, funds for a review (after 1 year), and costs of travel. The project, for one year in the first instance, will be submitted to AusAID by the end of March.

Members of PestNet agreed that this venture was in line with PestNet policy to provide information on plant protection to as wide an audience as possible and that information from Asia would always be of benefit to the Pacific and *vice versa*. Many of the crops grown were the same and so were the pests and diseases. Information gained in either region would benefit the other. The only concern was that the list server might be dominated by Asian members, but present experience thought that unlikely.

Wilco Liebrechts said that apart from discussing the options for the project proposal, PestNet was in contact with plant protection specialists in South East Asian countries who might wish to become PestNet moderators, to increase ownership of the network in that region. It was hoped that one moderator (perhaps 2), could be recruited. ACIAR has suggested that scientists from Thailand might wish to be moderators as a number were keen, highly qualified and had access to modern communication technology.

The expansion of PestNet will demand alterations of its constitution and it was agreed that Bob Macfarlane and Wilco Liebrechts will go through the constitution and make changes as appropriate, and submit these to the authority in Fiji.

Item 3: Support to PestNet from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community

1) SPC assistance to PestNet's project to assist Solomon Islands (Linking farmers to crop protection networks)

A proposal to help Solomon Islands has been written and a part-contribution towards the budget is being sought before submission to major donors.

The Chair gave a brief description of the project, updating Board members on the state of development of the project and the prospects of financial assistance. The proposal aims to help farmers in Solomon Islands access plant protection information by e-mail. Four NGOs will collaborate: the Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) will provide a link between farmers of the Planting Material Network; messages will be sent through the People First Network (PFnet), using modified HF radios, and PestNet members will backstop the project, providing technical assistance. The KGA sub-office in Malaita will be equipped to send messages to PFnet's Honiara base. The KGA will raise community awareness, and for at least three major pests (chosen by the community), farmers will trial and monitor control measures. An evaluation will

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be conducted to share benefits with other Pacific Island countries. Solomon Islands has been chosen to trial this new approach to extension as of the economy has been severely affected by recent civil unrest and government services are mostly non-existent. The project intends to determine if the provision of information in this way has the potential to improve crop yields, contribute to food security and increase household incomes.

The Board heard that the proposal has been finalised and will be submitted to the World Bank *infoDev* programme and the EU grant for Decentralised Cooperation. DFID, Fiji office and ACIAR, Canberra have said they will provide letters of support, but not financial contributions. In October, copies were sent to SPC to see if they were interested in contributing. A teleconference was on 21 December 2001 between SPC and PestNet (Grahame Jackson and Wilco Liebrechts) heard that SPC wished to collaborate with PestNet in the implementation of the project and that it would send a letter outlining the extent of the financial contribution and the conditions under which it will be provided.

Grahame Jackson also mentioned that the community peace and reconciliation fund (CPRF), Solomon Islands, was prepared to support the project, but the size of the contribution was not yet known.

The Board make a decision to submit the proposal once the terms and conditions of SPC's involvement and that of the CPRF was known, .

2) SPC participation in PestNet communication

Wilco Liebrechts outlined the discussions that he had had with SPC over several months (since July 2000). SPC has shown interest in participating/contributing to PestNet's on-line service, and there had been a suggestion that PestNet distribute SPC's newsletters and pest alerts. Although PestNet offered to provide the service for free, SPC has said it wishes to make a financial contribution of F\$5000 per annum. This offer has yet to be put in writing.

Bob Macfarlane and Mat Porea thought that the token amount should be accepted. The Secretary was asked to approach SPC once more for confirmation on the issue. These suggestions were agreed unanimously by the Board.

Item 4: FAO/PestNet TCP

Mat Porea gave an update on this proposal which intends to strengthen the role of PestNet in Pacific countries by carrying out PRAs into farmers' perceptions of pests and diseases, creating awareness in countries for PestNet services and introducing the region to Ecoport and other plant protection databases that have considerable local content. The proposal was revised after receiving FAO comment in December 2001, and resubmitted.

Wilco Liebrechts informed the Board that FAO wished to be supported by several other Pacific Island countries, and this was happening at present. When comments have been obtained, the project will again be submitted to FAO for consideration.

Grahame Jackson said that he would send the project to Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and Wilco Liebrechts would request ???? to review it.

Item 5: SPREP/PACINET/PestNet

Wilco Liebrechts introduced the agenda item by briefing the Board about a letter received from SPREP, the regional environment organisation. SPREP wishes to undertake a feasibility study in the next few months to develop PACINET (the Pacific taxonomy network, which is the regional 'loop' of BIONET). PACINET was established in March 2000 at a regional meeting in Nadi convened by SPC. The responsibility of coordinating PACINET have been transferred to SPREP, which has a wider biodiversity focus, than any other regional organisation.

The study would involve reaching an agreement between relevant CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) agencies to collaborate and share resources, as well as suggesting how taxonomic needs of countries might be met. PestNet was asked if it wished to be involved in this study.

There was unanimous feeling among the Board members that this was not a matter that should be undertaken by PestNet: there might be a conflict of interest. PestNet is already assisting the region with on-line identifications of pests and diseases, and as such it is a potential player in the development of PACINET; this prevents it undertaking the study, although it can give an opinion if asked. This decision does not prevent PestNet moderators carrying out the review, as long as their interests in PestNet are made clear.

Item 6: Board members and membership details

There was considerable discussion on Board membership following the decision to expand PestNet to APEC countries in South East Asia. The following was decided:

- 1) The present moderators would remain as Board members, but that Mat Porea would no longer be a moderator (because of work commitments)
- 2) Wa Sing would be asked if he wished to remain a Board member
- 3) Paul Ferrar of ACIAR would be asked to join the Board, in recognition of the support he has given to the organisation
- 4) A representative from Asia (?Thailand) would be asked to be a moderator, as well as AFFA.
- 5) AFFA and SPC would be asked to join committees dealing with PestNet APEC matters and the Solomon Islands project, respectively

As at 24 January 2002, there were 341 members of PestNet. More than 900 messages have been submitted since PestNet started. Annex 1 records membership details.

There being no further business the on-line meeting was closed at 17.45 Eastern Australian Time.

Annex 1

PestNet Subscribers (as at 24 January 2002)

COUNTRY	SUBSCRIBERS				
	GOV	NGO	EDU	IND	TOTAL
Australia	64		10	12	86
Canada	1			1	2
Chile			1		1
PRC China			1		1
Costa Rica				1	1
France	1				1
Germany			1		1
India	2				2
Indonesia	1			1	2
Israel				1	1
Italy				1	1
Malaysia	1				1
Mexico				2	2
Netherlands				1	1
New Zealand	21		4	6	31
Pacific Island Countries	70	8	18	17	113
Philippines				1	1
Singapore	1				1
Switzerland				1	1
Tanzania	1				1
Thailand			1		1
United Arab Emirates	1				1
United Kingdom (UK)	2		5		7
USA – Continental	3		3	1	7
USA - Hawaii	3		10	2	15
Vietnam	1				1
Yemen				1	1
CABI	6				6
FAO	3				3
Unidentified (Hotmail etc.)				48	48
Total Subscribers:	112	0	36	80	341