

Minutes of PestNet Meeting 4 February 2008, Biosecurity New Zealand, Auckland

Attendance

Bob Macfarlane (BM), Peter Maddison (PM) and Grahame Jackson (GJ)

Apologies: Wilco Liebrechts

Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting, 11-12 March 2006, were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising

1. Name change: Pacific PestNet to PestNet. In a note to the meeting, Wilco said that he thought he had written to the Registry of Titles, Fiji regarding the name change, but he can't find any (digital) record of it. He will follow up on this once back in Fiji in March.

Also, under Aim, he will check that the small change has been made so that the Aim will read:

“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 profits.”

2. Creating awareness in Asian countries. Wilco has given presentations about PestNet in Cambodia and left leaflets in Cambodia, Philippines, Maldives and Thailand in 2006-07.

3. It was noted that the PestNet/infoDev World Bank project was concluded in June 2006. Reports are on the website.

4. One of the USD accounts has been closed. There is now one USD account and one FD account.

5. Taholo Kami has resigned as Board member.

6. Website hosting: It was noted that Cocopest is not functioning anymore, but members were made aware of Pestnet quite some time ago. A coconut network is active at coconut@googlegroups.com and also addresses pest issues; many messages are eventually cross-posted.

7. Business cards. Business cards for Grahame, Bob and Wilco have been printed. Cards for Peter Maddision are needed.

Chairmans' report

The current number of subscribers are 796 and 85 are bouncing. The number of messages stands at 5168. The matter of the bouncing members is a problem. ISPs often do not consider the fault is theirs. For instance, Konrad Englberger has not been receiving PestNet messages for a long time now, one of our key contributors, and his ISP has only recently taken the matter seriously, but it is still not resolved.

Whether or not moving to the HEAR website would make any difference, is hard to tell.

The website has been transferred from Excella Software Technologies, India to The Centre for Biological Information Technology, UQ, Brisbane. Costs are about the same, \$450 annually for hosting. The advantage is that we are now dealing with CBIT, the staff of whom are interested in PestNet and there is software that PestNet can use. We have already used CBIT software to put the Summaries on the website. This can be done online. CBIT staff provide excellent support, and are always there to help when needed. The collaboration has been excellent.

In addition, Geoff Norton, Professor, CBIT, is interested in involving PestNet in work of the International Association for the Plant Protection Sciences – Geoff is president.

PestNet did enter the Stockholm Challenge in 2006, but did not win!

CTA has agreed to fund the summaries of PestNet messages. More on this under the Agenda item.

PestNet has not found a way of putting a disclaimer on the messages that it is not responsible for the accuracy of the IDs. A discretionary statement saying that IDs from photos can never be considered definitive is also needed. Insurance was not considered necessary.

Treasurer's report

The Treasurer was absent from the meeting, but submitted two balance sheets, one for the FJD account the other for the USD account. As of today, the two accounts stand at FJD498.82 and USD3024.08, respectively. PestNet did receive the final tranche from infoDev World Bank for the Linking Farmer project. All the reports, including the participatory evaluation are on the PestNet website.

The outstanding amounts, mentioned in the last report, have been paid, except the USD1800 to KGA for the Baetolau Farmers' Network. It was not considered necessary to make this payment, especially as the Network was not in a position to use the funds properly. Payments for the audit, the computer and outstanding amounts to GJ were made.

Operational issues

The website

The transfer of the website to UQ has also included some improvements. The pest identification form has been improved; there is a photo gallery of pests of Solomon Islands (other countries can be added, if there is a need); and the Summaries section.

CTA and the summaries of PestNet messages

The work has begun, the contract signed, and payment is awaited. To date, all the messages sent to PestNet and archived on Yahoogroups have been considered. Those messages with useful information, an interesting discussion or with a photo have been summarised and placed on the PestNet website. Each one has a link to the original message and the responses. The messages have been categorised under crops, pests, and non-pests, and there are many subcategories.

The task now is to edit the messages and also to check the identifications that have been made. These tasks will be the responsibility of PM and GJ. To assist PM with this work, PestNet will pay for the rent of a broadband connection for 3 months. Checking the photos will be PM's priority.

For going through 5000 messages and making summaries of those of interest, GJ will be paid €6000 or thereabouts (minus 10% to be retained by PestNet). He will share the remainder with PM to do the editing and to keep the Summaries section up to date.

Moving the list to HEAR

It is still difficult to decide what is the best course of action: whether to continue to use Yahoogroups or the lists of the University of Hawaii. It was decided to put off making a decision as more information was needed. If the list is moved, there was need to ensure that Yahoogroups continued to maintain the list as each Summary contains links to the Yahoogroups archives.

New projects

- 1) Diagnosis via photos: Phase 2 – CTA. It is not certain if CTA wishes to support more PestNet activities. If the organization is willing, the most pressing need is to develop keys for pest and diseases of Pacific crops using photographs. CBIT have an online player at the LUCID website and this may be suitable. FAO SAPA will be asked if it is interested in supporting this venture, starting with, say, okra, yam, sweet potato, sugar cane, bele, pumpkin, watermelon, cassava and possibly coconut. A key for taro has been developed – see TaroPest.

Action: Wilco will follow up with Keven Painting at CTA.

- 2) Africa PestNet. This has not taken off due to the lack of a local partner. PestNet remains in contact with Jan Breithaupt, FAO Addis Ababa. Also, Geoff Norton has spoken with people at IITA and they may be able to provide online IPM information and training. How this might involve PestNet is not clear at this time. There is a meeting of the system wide IPM people in the coming weeks. Geoff Norton will send a discussion paper.

Action: GJ will go to see Geoff at UQ in March to discuss this matter and other collaboration. PestNet will reimburse costs of the days' visit.

3) Fact sheets.

- SPC is interested in GJ writing some 300 fact sheets – basic information on pests and diseases for extensionists using 'simple' English. GJ has responded that it would be better if the contract was awarded through PestNet. That way the moderators could edit the fact sheets and improve their quality. It is possible that the fact sheets could be accessed via mobile phones.
- Fact sheets are also of interest to Geoff Norton and the International Association for the Plant Protection Sciences.

Action: GJ will follow up with SPC.

Messages to members

Members are not adding a scale to their photo, and should be reminded to do so. They should also state the country from where they reside.

There being no other business the meeting was concluded at 13.00.

Acknowledgement

Our thanks to Biosecurity New Zealand Monitoring, Auckland, for use of their meeting room and Internet connect.