Committee Name:	Regional Sugar Beet Forum	Meeting Date:	2nd February 7pm
Circulation:	East Midlands Sugar Forum	Location:	
		Chairman:	Geoff Hotchkin
		Secretary:	Andrew Wilson
		Tel:	
		Ref:	

Present: Geoff Hotchkin (Chairman), Michael Coy, Nick Wells ,Mark Leggott, Mark Ireland, Ian Stancer, Julian Powell, Graham Bett, David Epton, Paul White, Andrew Baxter, Nick Morris and Andrew Wilson

By Invitation: Nick Morris – British Sugar Agriculture Manager

In Attendance:

Apologies: Richard Hezlet

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and the group agreed that minutes of the last meeting held on 17th November 2015 were a correct record of events.

The Group Welcomed Nick Morris

Mr Morris provided a presentation to the group discussing an overview of the 15/16 Beet Campaign. Newark Factory was presently averaging a slice of 9'400mt – ahead of their budget of 9'150.
A new juice tank is being constructed at the factory to help increase capacity, along with vac pumps to improve better water pressure at the site. A plan for a wind turbine has been shelved.

The average drilling date for this season's crop was 25th March with the national crop acreage down from last year. Capping and wind blow issues had caused 1180ha of the national crop to be re-drilled with Newark's proportion of this being 210ha, up from 40ha in 2014.

The first loads arrived at the Factory on 23rd September 2015 and at present 667 out of 686 growers had delivered beet into Newark. The average yields are 70mt/ha at 17.55% sugar.

There had been a safety improvement in the wet tip at the factory which has worked well.

Beet reception has worked well with the new time Zones regarded as a success, the new updated handbook has been incorporated and 6 new operators have been working on the intake. An increase in Rhizoctonia and deteriorated roots has been evident which may be down to Maize rotations or the mild conditions.

The question was raised about surplus beet, with growers preferring to supply BS as local AD plants were only offering £1 over the BS price of £10per/mt. Several growers pointed out that the surplus beet price for next year seemed to be set too early with growers wanting it to be set later into the campaign.

Newark is expecting to end the campaign and close for intake on Saturday 13th February.

The question was raised by the group as to why the slice figures have been lower this year compared to last year. The reasons for this were firstly a fire early in the campaign reduced the capacity and BS are extracting more sugar from the beet this year which had caused a slightly slower throughput. The plant had a boil out just before Christmas which once again slowed intake. Growers expressed that the Christmas time boil out places more pressure on them and could be better timed.

Next year's crop is expected to be lower still at 80'000ha, BS are not increasing their self grow acreage. BS are intending to run all factories at full capacity next year as this has a positive effect on their fixed costs – the reduced crop may see a shorter campaign. This is not good news for hauliers as they rely on a longer more consistent campaign to operate their businesses.

Members asked BS for a greater degree of flexibility when loading in the day time and for loads reaching the factory around the 5pm cut off time.

Members asked BS that a price increase was required in order for them to remain committed to growing sugar. It was mentioned that they were growing out of loyalty at present as margins were thin to non existant. This is causing a lack of investment in growing the crop such as improvements to storage pads. Competiveness of other crops and use of land were playing on the decisions of growing.

BS hoped that the improvement in the price of global sugar markets would help lift the price but they were still carrying large amounts of stocks and did not expect to see stocks getting back to normal levels before 2017. They have found a market for selling 1mt bags of crystallised sugar into the EU.

The Group thanked Mr Morris for his presentation.

Sugar Board Update

Nick Wells, NFU National Sugar Board member updated the group on the last National Board Meeting. The Board had looked into the profitability of European Sugar companies and how they compared to BS. It was agreed that BS were still making a very small profit but European companies had seen losses. The low beet price in 16/17 could see BS make larger profits if the sugar markets continue to improve, which highlighted the need for greater flexibility to build into the 17/18 price.

The Logistics working group were still looking at improvements to the intake and haulage scheme. The use of technology such as trackers and satellites along with lighter trucks with less air drag could improve fuel efficiency; tests had showed a potential fuel saving of 5%.

The group mentioned that certain large hauliers were getting more favourable terms under the current intake system – Nick agreed to ask Donald Hulme to look into this issue.

The current elections are for 2 places on the board – with 1 vote per contract. At present there are 3 candidates.

NFU sugar accounts are looking healthy with the investment portfolio performing well, enabling the 8p levy to remain at its present level.

All seed has had new labels attached with warnings of neo nicitinoid dressing,. This decision was taken on the side of caution so the dressing is not lost due to any failure of regulations. Germaines are on target to have seed on farm by the end of February. The group agreed that seed bags should remain at the current size to avoid risk of spillage.

No agreement has been reached on the 2017 IPA,

The chairman called the meeting to a close.