

Circulation: BPOA Management Committee

Date: 17 June 2014

Contact: [chris.hartfield@nfu.org.uk](mailto:chris.hartfield@nfu.org.uk)

Tel: 02476 858630

## NFU update for BPOA management committee – 18 June 2014

This is an update on some of the key issues affecting the ornamentals industry that the NFU has been and will be working on to protect growers' interests, to create opportunities for your businesses, and to achieve industry-wide solutions.

The NFU is your organisation - we work on the issues that you tell us are important to your businesses. If you have any comments or questions contact NFU horticultural adviser Dr Chris Hartfield.

- **Code of Good Trading Practice for Plants and Flowers**

The code has been given to and discussed with one major retailer – Tesco – and Chris Hartfield attended a recent inaugural Tesco grower roadshow for its cut flower growers.

Copies of the code will be sent to other retailers and garden centre contacts (as provided by the BPOA) by the end of June.

At the same time the NFU will be sending a copy to of the code to the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) to make them aware of its existence, to raise our concerns about practices within the ornamentals supply chain, and to ask them consider whether or not it would be appropriate to include this supply chain within the remit of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP) when they next come to review this legislation.

- **Copa-Cogeca Flowers and Plants**

The NFU is due to attend the summer meeting of the Copa-Cogeca working party on Flowers at Plants in Cologne at the end of June. Copa is the basically the European level union of farming unions at plays a key role lobbying the European Commission and European Parliament. NFU representation on the working party was role formerly undertaken by Lionel Mills.

Issues to be discussed at the meeting include plant market situation in member states, EU promotion policy, update on the revision of combined nomenclature, implementation of the CAP in the member states, exchange of views on the revision of the EU Ecolabel for Soil Improvers and Growing Media, VAT State of Play, Information on Biotechnology directive and plant breeder rights, Expert group on EU Minor uses and specialty crops – State of Play and Report on the activities of the group, Update on the outcome of the EP plenary vote on plant health and official controls.

- **EU Ecolabel for Soil Improvers and Growing Media**

While all things peat and growing media are relatively quiet currently on the national front, the NFU has been feeding-in to the current revision of the EU Ecolabel for Soil Improvers and Growing Media, along the same principles we lobby on in the UK – that all growing media materials need to be treated equally, that decisions need to be evidence based, and that the functionality of the final product has to be considered – there is no point producing a growing media that meets all the Ecolabel criteria if the reality is you cannot grow plants in it, or to grow plants requires the addition of nutrients, water or other inputs at levels significant greater than for other growing media.

- **National Pollinator Strategy**

NFU responded to Defra's consultation on its proposed National Pollinator Strategy in early May, by generally supporting the actions to promote the management of farmland to benefit pollinators. NFU raised concerns that Government appears to be significantly reducing the access and rewards for farmers and growers via incentivised (e.g. agri-environment schemes) and regulatory (e.g. pollinator-focussed EFA's) mechanisms. This puts significant pressure on delivery of beneficial

measures through voluntary action (e.g. Campaign for the Farmed Environment). The NFU is giving evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee's current inquiry into the strategy.

- **Neonicotinoids**

The Oxford Martin School published in May an independent review of the evidence around neonicotinoids and insect pollinators. It concludes that there is a limited, evidence base to guide policy makers. It highlights that the declines in bees predate by some decades the introduction of neonicotinoid insecticides, and that there is also some evidence of a recent slowing or even reversal in the rate of decline for some pollinator groups. The NFU scrutinized and provided feedback on a draft of this review.

- **Promotion of British-grown produce and plants**

The NFU display of fruit, vegetables, flowers and plants at Chelsea 2014 was a great success with celebrities and visitors to the show, and attracted good media coverage promoting British-grown produce, flowers and plants. The stand, sponsored by Waitrose, will also feature at Hampton Court Flower Show in July.

The display featured flowers and plants from BPOA members, including Hill Brothers, Double H Nurseries, Lionel Mills.

The signage on the display carried the Home Grown logo.

- **International Grower of the Year**

The NFU has been supporting UK ornamentals grower of the year 2014 Barnsfold Nurseries to submit an application for the international grower of the year competition. The NFU gets to make the UK nomination via its membership of the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH).

- **Plant health 'closed list'**

NFU lobbying successfully persuaded MEPs to vote against a plant health proposal for a 'closed system' to be applied to all traded plant material, including ornamental plants, fruit, vegetables and flowers, and propagation material. The proposal would have added unnecessary bureaucracy and closed down existing trades in low risk material. As such, it went against MEPs previous support for the Commission's objective to simplify and clarify the current provisions on plant health, and their support for a system that is risk-based, effective and proportionate. Instead of the closed system, the European Parliament voted in April to support proposals to strengthen measures that focus on high risk 'emerging trades'. Member States will be able to introduce temporary measures on all plants, plant products and other objects imported from outside the EU in cases of high risk trade or where risks are unknown.

- **Sustainable Use Directive**

There is a requirement under the Sustainable Use Directive for Member States to encourage the uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The European Commission defines this as economically and environmentally sustainable management of pests, weeds and diseases using cultural, chemical, physical and biological controls. UK regulators have recognised that growers and farmers carry out a wide range of these practices already, and so have agreed that a voluntary approach to demonstrating their use of IPM is appropriate, as opposed to regulatory approaches taken by other European Member States. To satisfy requirements the NFU has developed the new IPM plan for the Voluntary Initiative (VI). This replaces the original VI Crop Protection Management Plan (CPMP). The plan can be found [here](#).

- **Trickle irrigation**

Defra has again delayed its plans to implement regulations to bring in new authorisations, including trickle irrigation, within the abstraction licensing regime. Defra commissioned further research on the economic impact of licensing trickle irrigation in 2013. A public consultation is expected shortly with regulations to bring trickle irrigation (and other 'exempt' licensing activities) expected later in the year. An NFU 'trickle irrigator sub group' has been established which is linked to the Horticulture

Board. The group met with Defra in April and began work on an action plan and communications programme in preparation for the forthcoming consultation. Defra originally consulted on proposals to bring trickle irrigation into the licensing regime back in July 2009. In our response, the NFU stressed that we are keen to ensure that the provisions for trickle irrigators are as fair, simple, appropriate and proportionate as possible

**The NFU lobbies Government in Westminster and Brussels, industry representatives and opinion formers on these policy issues, to achieve results that benefit your businesses.**

More information about the activities of the NFU horticulture team can be found in the Horticulture section of **NFUonline.com**.