

Conference: Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

22 May 2008, Warwick



Potato flower. Reproduced by kind permission of TJ Weightman. www.tjwphotography.co.uk

This one day workshop was convened to bring together key stakeholders including Defra, plant breeders and researchers involved with both crop genetic improvement and the identification and conservation of landraces and crop wild relatives. The aim was to discuss the future of crop genetic research in the context of the crop genetic improvement networks (CGIN's), the government's responsibilities for conservation of germplasm (including landraces and crop wild relatives), and the application of new technologies to better understand the origin and extent of diversity in our major crop plants. The meeting was a success, enabling discussion of such diverse topics as an economic analysis of genetic improvement research for improving the public good; a national strategy for conservation and use of crop wild relatives; current and future roles of UK genebanks; recent work on UK landraces including bere barley on Orkney and Shetland cabbage; genetic characterisation of post harvest spoilage in lettuce; breeding for improved lodging resistance in wheat and modern techniques for creating genetic variation such as tilling. Industry representatives indicated their support for the role of the CGINs which were now working well, and providing a forum for breeders and researchers to interact, although their activities had to be viewed as a work in progress. The need for continued government funding to support plant breeding at a practical level was underlined, and an *ex ante* economic analysis outlined the high returns found for public good outputs from crop improvement research. This is a message which needs to be reinforced with Defra and other government funders, and a debate in which AAB should take a leading role.

Dr Richard Weightman, July 2008

Institute of Biology AAB Special membership

The Institute of Biology is offering all AAB members the chance to join their membership scheme at a special rate. If you join before the end of September, you will get two years' membership for the price of one. Wherever you are in your career as a biologist the Institute can help you. Membership benefits include their prestigious journal 'Biologist', discounts on events, courses and publications, and networking opportunities. Joining IoB is also the only way to apply for 'Chartered Biologist' (CBiol) status, which recognises high professional levels of expertise, and is highly valued both in industry and the academic world.

To take advantage of this special offer, call the IoB's membership team on 020 7936 5942, or email membership@iob.org and quote 'AAB'.

Funding opportunities from the Wellcome Trust

Technology Transfer at the Wellcome Trust is a committed funder of translational research, the process by which innovations are translated into new health products. Helping to bridge the gap between fundamental research and commercial application, it supports both academic researchers and companies by funding applied research or development projects to a stage where they are attractive to a follow-on funder.

With the support of a Wellcome Trust Translation Award, Profs Simon Jones and Nicholas Topley of Cardiff University are developing a chimeric IL-6-sIL-6R fusion protein; the proposed use of this Resolution Therapeutic™ is in bacterial infections. The group has received funding from the Wellcome Trust to progress the chimeric protein through formal preclinical evaluation.

The properties of IL-6 are critical for the successful resolution of acute inflammation. Many of the biological activities assigned to IL-6 are mediated via a naturally occurring soluble IL-6 receptor (sIL-6R), which plays an integral role in controlling transition between innate and acquired immune responses. This immunological switch is essential for the successful resolution of any inflammatory event.

For further information about the awards available, and for more examples of past funding, contact: T +44 (0)20 7611 8202. E techtransfer@wellcome.ac.uk. www.wellcome.ac.uk/techtransfer/aabnews