Sorghum and Millet Germplasm Committee

Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan, Kansas

September 1, 2015

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm by the Chairman. 22 members and visitors were present, with two additional members connected via telephone. After introductions, the 2014 Minutes were amended, then approved. We briefly reviewed the report prepared by Peter Bretting, National Programs Staff, which he submitted to the committee prior to the meeting. The key points were the continuing utilization of germplasm programs by a wide range of constituents and the plans for the 2016 Federal budget in this area. Gary Kinard (NGRL) discussed the issues with the implementation of GRIN Global, as the process has been delayed as they reviewed and implemented increased security measures. After some well publicized data breaches, the rules and processes regarding access to government maintained databases were audited and meeting the updated requirements has required significant reprograming and additional security steps. It is hoped that that GRIN Global will be fully operational soon, but no timeline was proposed; the process has been made more difficult as key personnel have retired. The regular GRIN program is still operational and seed requests are being processed through that system. Gary Pederson, acting sorghum curator, opened his report by announcing that all but 239 out of 38,202 accessions were available for distribution, a remarkable figure which represents the culmination of many years of effort to upgrade the collection. He discussed the difference in the collections at Fort Collins and Griffin, then updated the committee on progress in moving the collection into -18C storage to improve viability. He also highlighted that the sorghum community continues to be one of the heavier users of the collection, with 175 requests for 13, 593 items so far in 2015. We briefly discussed the fact that very little information is returned to be added to the characterization of these materials once material is distributed. A recent collection of 162 wild sorghums from Australia are being added via the quarantine facility in Beltsville; some of these are now available, but the seed amounts are very small. Gary wrapped up his report by commenting that Merrelyn Spinks plans to retire at the end of the year, and other retirements within 5 years will greatly reduce the experienced staff within the germplasm system.

Justin Weinheimer and Brent Bean briefly commented on the research projects being funded by the check-off board and commented that the size of the current crop may offer additional funding resources in the future. Tim Dalton, KSU, commented on the current projects underway under the auspices of the US-AID funded Sorghum and Millet Innovation lab. Two US-DOE scientists, Joe Cornelius and Dan Northrup, discussed the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy (ARPA-E) sorghum project, TERRA. This $30 million, 2-3 year project, has enrolled several universities and engineering firms to develop high through-put phenotyping and genotyping platforms. Sorghum is the model crop for the system. Xinzhi Ni, USDA, brought the group up to date on the serious outbreak of sugarcane aphids in the southeastern United States in 2015, which led to a general discussion of progress on this pest.

The Chairman announced that four members, Gebisa Ejeta, Yilma Kebede, Cleve Franks and Roger Monk will be off the committee as of this year. The group decide to move Kebede to an exofficio position and nominated Ben Beyer, Geoff Morris, Brent Bean, Scott Armstrong, Chad Hayes, Chris Little and Tesfaye Tesso to join the committee. Monk will contact these for confirmation. Since there was no apparent succession plan in place to replace Monk as Chairman, Jeff Dahlberg agreed to chair the committee on an interim basis until a chairman can be selected.

Repectfully submitted,

Roger Monk

Chairman