

**Plant License Task Force
Minutes from 7/7/06 Meeting
University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus**

Present: Minnesota Apple Growers Association, Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association, Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, University of Minnesota Office of Patents, Technology & Marketing, University of Minnesota Plant Breeders, The Minnesota Grown Program

Absent: Minnesota Barley Growers Association, Minnesota Corn Growers Northern Minnesota Forge Turf Seed Advisory Committee

Introductory Remarks

- Bev Durgan, Task Force Chair and Director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, described the role of the Task Force in studying the impact on Minnesota producers of agricultural products from the University of Minnesota licensing germplasm.
- The group discussed events leading to the legislation implementing the Task Force and the release of the MN 1914 apple

Task Force Members' Expectations

- Task Force members shared their expectations for the Task Force. Topics discussed included:
 - Better communication with grower community
 - Increased understanding of how the licensing system works
 - Develop ways to maintain the breeding program
 - Assuring that direct marketers have access to new varieties
 - Assuring that intellectual property policies are transparent and deliver maximum benefit to consumers.
 - Developing guidelines that reflect the marketplace, consumer demands and the legal and financial situation
 - Developing guidelines that allow the University and growers to work together to chart the future.
 - Clarifying issues involving funding, providing new varieties and also training the next generation of plant breeders and growers.

Plant Breeding Program Discussion

- Bev Durgan delivered a presentation about the history and current status of U of M variety development. That presentation is posted online. Discussion after the presentation included:
 - Faculty expertise, the needs of the state and its farmers and budgets play a big role in determining the direction of U research

- The University is studying the impacts of plant patents on the parts of the world that are short of food
- Gary Beil, Executive Director of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA), delivered a presentation on national and international variety development. Key points included:
 - MCIA is an independent, not for profit, organization housed on the St. Paul campus. It was founded 104 years ago to promote technology and delivery of technology to their members.
 - MCIA conducted the first seed certification program in the world and was a pioneer that other states have followed.
 - The trend that began in the early 1900s was for varieties to be developed exclusively for commodity cropping systems
 - In recent years the trend has been to more value added/identity preserved crops and trait specific programs
 - The number of certified seed acres in Minnesota has fallen dramatically in the last 25 years. MCIA is now heavily involved in trait specific certification programs and organic certification.
 - Increased globalization and increased demand for identity preserved crops will drive the future. Increased competition is coming from China, Canada, Argentina and Brazil.
 - Non-exclusive, general released varieties often don't fit well in newer markets because of the demand for traceability, the role of variety marketing and intellectual property protection factors.

Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station variety Release Policies and Procedures

- Bev Durgan gave a presentation that is posted online. Discussion after the presentation included:
 - The money the University generates from plant licenses does not pay for the costs of the plant breeding programs. These programs rely on federal and state dollars.
 - The market and the uniqueness of the variety determine if a release is public or private.

Task Force Discussion: Self-governing rules, next steps, housekeeping details, schedule and agenda for next meeting.

- The group decided that the organizations can select individuals to represent them at future meetings.
- The overall goals for the Task Force will be:
 - To develop recommendations that can be provided to the Legislature and Board of Regents
 - To demonstrate to Legislature that growers and University can work together on issues involving plant variety licensing
- Specific areas the Task Force will focus on include:

- Communication and involvement: Increase understanding of the University licensing process, transparency of that process and flow of information when decisions are being made.
- Access: Balance the needs of growers, marketers and consumers for access to University-developed plant varieties and germplasm.
- Prepare for the future: Help position the University breeding program in an era of changing funding and changes in the marketplace, consumer demand and legal situation.
- Part of the next meeting will be working groups that will discuss the three focus areas identified above. Members should contact John Byrnes (byrnes@umn.edu) to volunteer for a specific group. That meeting will be held August 21.