PROGRESS REPORT (Summary)

15 March 2003 to 30 April 2003

Project Update

Project Plan
The team is continuing to work to a "go live" date of 1 August 2003 for Phase One of Seed Certification although timings will be tight. Concern has been raised by Seed Certification Users that implementing the New Seed Regulations was taking longer than anticipated. Extra resource has been brought in by NIAB and duties re-assigned to optimise efficiency. NIAB Seed Certification project team still retain the aim of completing the modified database by 1 July 2003 in order for end to end testing of the ESP system to be completed by the end of July 2003.

Two new developers began working on the ESP project at the beginning of April. They have been making great strides in developing the Seed Certification forms. A Test environment is being set up so that NIAB Users may have direct access to functionality as it is developed and provide instant feedback to the developers. Discussions have been held with Communications Directorate on the design of the system to determine the status of corporate identity issues. The ESP system will have to conform to Defra’s web guidelines.

Work is still being undertaken on PBR/NL analysis. Although a great deal of analysis has been done over the past six weeks and an overview and summary document have been produced, there are still a number of validations and functions to be defined and details to sort out. Estimates of a further 3 –4 weeks work in this area have been proposed. REFLEX development has not yet started.

Payment Engine of the Government Gateway
A useful meeting was held with the Office of e Envoy, ITD and various colleagues from Defra Finance Division, York. The OeE explained how the payment engine would link with the ESP system, Datacash and the banks. Datacash, the service provider, would charge on a sliding scale depending on volumes. We are required to define a service reference number that will be used by the payment engine and passed on to the bank in order to identify payments. There are various procedures that need to be put into place by York in collaboration with the banks and Datacash. Debit/Credit facilities are available for Defra to test now (although we are not yet in a position to do so). Direct Debit facilities could be available in the summer but again certain strategic decisions are required by York in order to take this forward.

First 4 Farming – Integrated Solution
A further meeting was held with the technical director of F4F to determine how the systems that various Plant Breeding and Seeds Companies have already invested in could be seamlessly integrated with ESP. This direct interface solution could also be used by other Third Party software providers or
companies that would be interested in extensively modifying their systems to submit data seamlessly. Although F4F had approached Defra about sharing costs, the Project Board re-affirmed that any costs to the Industry to modify their systems was considered to be outside the scope of the project.

Helpdesk Awareness
A small group of Users went to Northallerton to look at best practice in how to run a Helpdesk. The use of Heat software in operation was seen and those present considered it easy to use and valuable for tracking calls. NIAB was investigating possible wider benefits of purchasing the software for tracking the many queries with which they deal. Headsets were recommended for operators as well as working in a quiet area. The Project Board was considering, with the Operations Unit staff, the approach that should be taken towards customer support both in the short term for Phase One and also once the system is rolled out in April 2004.

Digital Certificates
Equifax were contacted to discuss options for offering digital certificates online through various screens that were developed for e-iacs. There are a number of technical and practical issues surrounding the use of digital certificates and the Project Board recently decided that User ID and password would be acceptable as a minimum level of security to use the ESP system.

Hardware procurement
The two DIS Lites arrived at Guildford in March and have been sent to the OeE team in Swindon to be built. A new version of Government Gateway software was released successfully at the end of April, so the DIS Lites should now be in a position to be built and returned to Defra by early May. NIAB have received and installed an Oracle footprint server plus software and set up the firewall.

Awareness Training and Benefits Realisation
I gave overview presentations about the ESP project which were generally well received to a wide range of customers as part of the UKASTA workshops on the New Seed Regulation Changes. Assistance from some Industrial partners in terms of quantifying benefits and some was sought and figures are being collated. I have the outline of a Benefits Realisation Plan and will continue to work on this in the coming month.

Planning for Phase One
Information on what partners would like to submit in Phase One is being collected and I shall be liaising closely with NIAB to determine how we can ensure that all information relating to applications that Industrial partners submit via ESP is inputted by NIAB onto the ESP database.

Kay Williams Project Manager