



Horticultural
Development
Company

New Project

HNS 136a

Management tools for
optimising nursery space
use and production
forecasting

Project Number: HNS 136a

Title: Management tools for optimising nursery space use and production forecasting

Start and end dates: 01 April 2010 to 31 March 2013

Project Leader: Prof. John Colvin

Project Co-ordinator: David Hooker, Malcolm Dick, Bill Godfrey, John Richards.

Location: Growers' holdings, including those of the Project Co-ordinators

Background and project objectives: HNS growers identified nursery-space management and production forecasting as R&D topics where research could be targeted to help maximise the profitability of nurseries. Apart from the work carried out during a previous project (HNS 136), very little research has been carried out to date on decision support systems (DSS), for horticultural businesses. An opportunity exists, therefore, to collect data and build a DSS, with the clear aim of improving significantly the competitiveness, efficiency and profitability of HNS growers' businesses.

The majority of HNS growers do not appear to have operational management tools or DSS designed specifically to help them to make important decisions about the best mix of species to grow, in what quantities, how best to utilise their nurseries' space resources and to minimise the commercial effect of waste due to unsold plants at the end of the season. They cannot currently, therefore, easily and quickly assess the impact of their management decisions and ideas on the profitability of their businesses. The activities described in this proposal were formulated specifically to address this need.

Project activities involve the collection and analysis of appropriate on-nursery data, as well as associated financial information. These data will be used to build an Excel spreadsheet-based operations management tool that will allow HNS Production and Sales Managers to assess easily and rapidly alternative options and thus provide an objective, quantitative basis for decision making that maximises the profits generated by their complex businesses. This tool will be made available to growers, through the HDC, at the end of the project.

Research in Holland has also found that due to the complexity of the production planning process and the inexperience of nursery growers with the Linear Programming technique, working with DSS systems calls for a high degree of grower involvement and support, at least in the starting phase. This has been taken into account when planning the project's activities.

Further information

Email the HDC office (hdc@hdc.org.uk), quoting your HDC number, alternatively contact the HDC at the address below.

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