

plant breeders, introducers and producers, researchers and technologists, and (b) to increase its technology transfer role and stimulate further research projects for the sector. Both of these activities will aim to position the Centre as the main information hub for the UK cut-flower industry, with a view to developing further into a 'Crop Association' role.

Aims and Objectives

(i) Project aim(s):

To identify novel cut-flower crops providing new opportunities for UK growers, and improving existing crops through new genetics and improved agronomy etc.

(ii) Project objective(s):

(A) Information gathering

1. To review 'new' cut-flower crops and cultivars available from breeders, seed houses, plant producers and other trials programmes to inform the experimental programme.
2. To review (and disseminate where appropriate) international literature (printed and web-based) on cut-flower crops, especially in respect of novel crops and improving cut-flower quality.
3. To review and disseminate trends in cut-flower production in the UK and internationally.

(B) Experimental programme

4. To demonstrate novel ornamentals and assess their potential as cut-flower crops for growing in the UK either outside or under Spanish To evaluate the basic agronomic requirements, yield and quality of cultivars of cut-flower crops (including bulbous plants) previously identified as having potential for exploitation by UK growers and retailers.
5. To investigate crop requirements needed to enhance cut-flower quality and supply, such as height control, pinching, control of nutritional disorders, pests or diseases, extensive cultivar testing and seasonal extension. This work will be predominantly undertaken on cut flower species that show promise from the ongoing (and earlier) CFC, NPD trials but the CFC would also hope to take on work to look at problems with "main stream" cut flower crops if appropriate.
6. To validate the use of 'new' cut-flower crops through grower assessments carried out on commercial sites. These "new" crops will have been identified from the literature reviews, breeder liaison and input from other established trials programmes such as those undertaken by John Dole in the USA.
7. To investigate the best way to handle new products.

(C) Technology transfer

8. To disseminate information from (A) and (B) regularly via the Centre's web-site, HDC News (or other periodicals as required), an annual Open Day and annual project reports.
9. To review trials results and other information (availability, production, costings) on two cut-flower crops each year, publishing these as fact-sheets.
10. To disseminate basic costings on all subjects that show market potential to levy payers at the earliest stage that this is practically possible.
11. To encourage the submission of concept notes for new R&D projects on cut-flower crops, initially for review by the Centre's Management Group and thence by the HDC BOF and PC Panels.
12. To be an information hub for the UK cut-flower industry with a view to fulfilling a 'Crop Association' role.

Approach

The work of the Centre will continue to be guided by an industry-based Management Group consisting of growers, packers, retailers and others and chaired and convened by the Project Leader. The Management Group will meet formally three times a year, and informally as appropriate. It will:

- Take an overview of the current state of UK cut-flower production and imports and identify opportunities for UK producers to grow novel crops.
- Identify any external expertise required to advise the Management Group on specialist issues.
- Advise on priorities for demonstrations and trials, on cultural practices, market specifications, crop economics, etc.
- Contribute to the Centre's web-site as appropriate.
- Keep its membership under review and seek to broaden its representation in the industry and increase grower support.
- Assist in promoting the Centre and UK cut-flower production generally.

The trials will continue to be accommodated at Rookery Farm (R. Robinson & Son), Holbeach St Johns, Lincolnshire, where the resources used include 700m² of Spanish tunnels and 500m² of outside beds. In general, plants will be grown through polythene mulch on slightly raised beds provided with drip irrigation. In order to control production standards, whenever practical, the Centre will run trials of UK-propagated product alongside conventionally sourced product from the Continent. Where justified, prophylactic sprays will be applied against expected pest and disease attacks, taking advice from pathologists, entomologists and other specialists as needed. When appropriate, assessments will include post-harvest storage and vase-life testing.

The MG approved CFC strategy for the coming years is detailed below along with some notes detailing relevant activities:-

1. To develop a demonstration and development centre for cut flowers where new crops can be demonstrated, developed and discussed and shown to cut flower retailers. (Encompassed under the overall activity within the project).
2. To develop a vehicle for growers to be able to discuss problems and opportunities and for the CFC to then facilitate/influence the delivery of R&D to provide solutions or for the CFC to undertake relevant work to provide the solution. (Covered by on-going Open Days and MG meetings and to be extended via the Crop Association Role as detailed under point 4.
3. Identify suitable R&D 'partners', develop close working relationships and agree shared strategy for cut flower R&D work to deliver this. (Discussions now underway with STC and Lincoln University).
4. To develop and manage an effective crop association that facilitates the flow of ideas/identification of problems from the industry, influences R&D, influences legislative bodies, promotes cut flowers and provides the single point of contact for the industry with the press. (See point 13 under 2013 workplan details below).
5. To develop close working relationships and active engagement programmes with universities, colleges, training organisations and schools. Influence all to ensure that relevant courses are available for students of all abilities. (Initial plans include liaising with Lincoln University and Moulton Collage but these will be developed over time).