

Grower Liaison Panel (DEFRA Offices, York, 31 March 2013)

Horticulture Wales was amongst almost 20 representatives from the industry invited to attend a Grower Liaison Panel at DEFRA's office in Yorkshire to discuss some of the ongoing issues the sector faces.

Amongst the topics covered both during and in the immediate aftermath of the meeting were:

- **Targeted use of pesticides** – attendees were informed such measures would be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- **The Bracken Control Group** – a report on the emergency use of Asulam recommends that anyone considering applying the herbicide to control bracken this year must contact either their distributor or an aerial/ground-based contractor as soon as possible. The emergency authorisation period for using Asulam will run for 120 days starting from 20 May, with the application window open until 31 October. After this date, it will be illegal to store any Asulam products.
- **Neonicotinoids** – following on from the meeting, on 30 April it was announced that neonicotinoids containing clothianidin, imidacloprid or thiamethoxam would be withdrawn from commercial use on a wide range of crops for a two-year period, and banned completely from amateur use, from 30 September. Due to a period of grace, these regulations will now not come into force until 30 November. (*NB this ban will now be enforced from 1 December 2013*) During the meeting, a number of concerns about the move were put forward, including that badgers were the main predator of ground bees; that the needs of all pollinating insects need to be taken into account; and that there had been a lack of decisiveness and slow response to the issue.
- **Minor uses of materials** – attendees were informed that this issue was of particular importance as it covered many of the specialist crops favoured by small growers.



- **Sustainable use** – following in-depth consultation, the UK government submitted its National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides to the European Commission in February. The plan, which builds on the UK’s longstanding and rigorous pesticides regulatory regime and other existing statutory and voluntary controls, incentive schemes and research programmes, was put forward ahead of many other European Union member states, and will be reviewed every five years.
- **Grandfather Rights for pesticide use** – delegates were informed that the Chemicals Regulation Directorate would be issuing updated guidance later in the year on the future of the exemption that currently enables growers and producers above a certain age to use plant pesticides without holding official certification.
- **Equipment inspections** – confirmation was expected soon that the National Sprayer Testing Scheme, which aims to ensure sprayer equipment and agrochemicals are being used in a safe, cost-effective way that limits the environmental impact, would be administered by the Agricultural Engineers Association.
- **Extended buffer zones** – proposals to reduce extended buffer zones are being considered due to risks associated with particular types of nozzles.
- **The use of non-PPE gloves** – attendees were informed of progress with an ongoing project that is investigating the exposure risk of workers re-entering areas treated with pesticides whilst wearing non-PPE gloves. The use of gloves is just one risk mitigation measure that is being evaluated, a move that already takes place in at least one other EU member state.

