

# **Biodynamic and Organic Plant Breeding and Seeds Limited**

## **Annual General Meeting**

**Saturday 9 November 2019, 11.30am at Waltham Place, White Waltham, Berkshire**

### **Attendees:**

Board Members: Peter Brinch (Chair), Anthony Smith (Secretary), Elly Austin, Andre Tranquilini

Staff: David Price, Kate Ayre, Helen Holmes, Gillian Burch

Members & Non-members: Alison Bond, Jane Brown, Page Dykstra, Francis Everson, Gareth Goode, Kim Goode, Gabriel Kaye, Andre Kleinjans, Beatrice Krehl, Rod Sazio, Sarah Schad, George Schad, Richard Smith, Frank Zenhorst, Ute Wegener, Andy Rutherford, Libby Blake, Nigel Burch, David Austin, Sophie Tranquilini, Marilyn Homer

**Apologies:** Ken Maggs, Gemma McKay, Laurence Adams, Christopher North, Margery Ward, Phil Sumption, Isabeau Meyer-Graft, Naomi Bowen, Chris Stockdale, Charles Mitchell

### **Introduction:**

Chair Peter Brinch gave an introductory explanation/welcome to the assembled attendees after getting everyone to introduce themselves.

## **Minutes**

### **1. Approval of minutes of the last Annual General Meeting**

Elly Austin proposed and Frank Zenhorst seconded approval of minutes.

### **2. Receipt of accounts and report of the Auditor**

David Price presented the accounts, and read out a written submission made by the Auditor, Ken Maggs, in his absence. Written copy follows.

### **Biodynamic and Organic Plant Breeding and Seeds Ltd Auditors report for the period ended 30 June 2019**

Please accept my sincere apologies for being unable to attend the AGM this year.

The first thing that should be noted is that this report relates to the period from 1 April 2018 to 30 June 2019 which is the result of changing the year end at the last AGM. Comments contained herein therefore relate to a fifteen-month period and not twelve months.

The audit opinion which you will have seen states that in my opinion the financial statements show a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs and of its loss for the period. It also states that I have not seen anything in the other reports which are contrary to this report. The report does highlight that there is a risk to going concern due to the continued losses suffered and the need for financial support to continue. This is stated without qualifying my

report or opinions stated therein. Please note that this report is my opinion at the time of writing this, Tuesday 5 November 2019 and therefore should I become aware of anything between that date and the date I sign the report off then that opinion could change.

The level of seed sales has been increasing over the last couple of years and shows what can be achieved although further expansion is important for the society's continuance. Prior to interest (which is primarily the bank loan) a surplus was being generated. However, this is solely down to the several large donations including one of £20,000 which without would have meant another significant loss.

Part of the problem is that growth takes funds and the Society currently lacks that investment. Many people are giving the necessary time and effort but at times cash resource is as; if not more important. Unfortunately increasing the level of activity does mean that there is an increase in employed labour. Under current UK legislation the living wages rates have been increasing at above inflation and as a result the cost of employing anyone is increasing similarly, a 4.4% minimum wage increase and increase in the level of the auto enrolment contribution by 1% has a marked impact which cannot always be passed on at the sales level and thus hits the bottom line.

David and his team have made a good effort in keeping costs down but at times that can result in some increased expenses. Advice and assistance is given once something has occurred instead of getting things in line beforehand or from the start. I know that David is trying to get systems sorted to enable growth and expansion to be properly managed in future. It is all part of the learning curve.

As stated, please do not take a direct comparison on the figures as you are comparing 15 months to 12 months. However, a loss of £50,000 again this year needs to be halted. We need growers and members to get seed through the Co-Operative for it to work and continue. This is a true loss figure and may need a rethink in terms of the return to the members/growers. Last year we saw a margin (on sales) of 69.3% but the period in question this had reduced to 63.0%. the same level would have seen an increase in profit of £9,000.

When the total overheads are considered and costs to sell the seeds then it is clear that the level of sales needs to be much higher. If we have overheads of £130,000 then the margin from sales must be at least that figure. We achieved sales of £155k and therefore in reality there was not really a return to growers. However, the members will want a return or why should they go to the effort.....The simple alternative is the need to increase sales and that is where everyone needs to pull together to achieve the seed throughput.

I apologise for the sales pitch but it is important for the society.

I hope that this does not detract from another great weekend for the members and look forward to seeing some of you in the near future.

**Ken Maggs**  
**Auditor**

### **3. Re-appointment of Auditor for 2019-2020**

Ken Maggs was proposed by Gabriel Kay and seconded by David Austin.

### **4. Application of profits**

No profits are available.

5. **Elections to the Board**

Peter Brinch and Elly Austin were re-elected to the Board. There was some discussion about the need for two new Board members.

6. **Change to the rules**

David Price updated on the decision of the 2016 AGM that if Seed Co-operative closed the proceeds would go to the Biodynamic Association. This change had not taken place as we needed the signature of a Notary on the application form.

7. **Seed Co-operative 2019 Annual Report**

David Price presented a photographic record of the past 15 months showing crops grown, seed gathered and problems due to lack of space. Work already carried out and work proposed to increase space was demonstrated.

8. **Any other business**

Questions from the floor and various discussions concluded the AGM.

9. **Date of the next AGM**

7 November 2020 at Weleda HQ, Ilkeston, Derbyshire.