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GENEVA

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

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PROPOSAL FOR A CENTRAL COMPUTERIZED DATA BASE

Document prepared at the request of
the Technical Working Party for
Ornamental Plants and Forest Trees
by experts from the United Kingdom

(Original)

Technical UPOV Committee

Proposal for a central computerised database1. Introduction

At its meeting in Cambridge June 24-28 1991, the Technical Working Party for Ornamental Plants (TWO) discussed the desirability of setting up a central computerised database for access by the competent authorities of UPOV member states. Further information was elicited by means of a questionnaire and responses were received from Denmark, Israel, Japan, South Africa, Spain, UK (Cambridge) and UK (Brogdale).

This paper summaries the responses to give a preliminary assessment of the need together with an estimate of the cost benefits which could accrue. Many ornamental and fruit varieties are grown and protected simultaneously in many member states and therefore it was felt that there was a particular need for this project. However, Denmark has expressed some caution, pointing out that funding is presently being sought for an EC project for the provision of a centralised database covering the same information.

2. Access to Data

Experts of the TWO discussed the benefits of instant access to administrative and technical data from other member states. The species which should be covered are:-

Ornamental plants generally but especially chrysanthemum, rose, apple, pear, cherry, plum, ribes, rubus, fragaria, chinchinchee, protea, leucadendron, leucospermum, lachenalia and other unusual species. Specifically, the data which were felt to be useful were:

2.1 administrative data relating to varieties already publicly available in National Gazettes including:-

country of origin, owner, applications received, variety denominations, grouping characteristics, withdrawals, decisions, variety names granted, synonyms, species code, application number, breeders reference, applicants address, agent detail, status, dates, proposed and actual termination of grants and decisions, addition to list of species eligible for protection.

2.2 technical data:-

variety descriptions, similar varieties or comparisons. For those countries operating bilateral agreements for DUS and PBR testing, experimental data relating to candidate and control varieties are also transferred.

Lists of descriptions held, including common knowledge varieties. Varieties under test.

2.3 UPOV test guidelines for each species and National test guidelines, where there is no UPOV document.

- 2.4 UPOV standardised forms.
- 2.5 National forms - eg application forms, Technical Questionnaires, variety description forms, lists of fees, plant material required etc.

3. Benefits of Access

The benefits of access could be quantified in the following ways:-

3.1 Time savings in searching for information:-

Estimates of this vary from 10 days of staff time per year (UK-Cambridge) to 6 months of staff time per year (Israel).

3.2 Elimination of retests caused by inadequate information:-

Savings vary from staff time of 1 week (UK-Cambridge) to 3 months (Israel).

3.3 Elimination of unnecessary parallel test:-

Savings vary from staff time of zero (UK-Cambridge) to 6 months (Israel)

3.4 Other savings will arise from more efficient management of reference collections (2 weeks), and space saving on hard disc.

It was thought that there would be additional advantages in the receipt of up-to-date data; being able to retrieve data from one source only, knowing that data are checked, evaluated and edited, being able to send data to one destination only, as well as quick, easy, clean delivery and receipt of data. The user is able to receive data on request for their own use and it was thought also that a central database may release member States from the necessity of providing their own system.

Other advantages would arise from improved credibility by reducing the need to ask breeders questions to which the answers should already be known. "One expert said, the current inability to get rapid access to information means that half finished jobs pile up and sometimes get forgotten, whilst waiting for replies to letters/faxes". Another expert thought that since plants inherently grow differently and show different characteristics in a range of environments, it would be most useful to have a broad view of this.

4. Solutions

The database could be provided in several ways:-

- 4.1 A central computer system based in Geneva. The system would hold information on all species and all varieties which have registered applications in member states. The disadvantage of such a system is that it would need new hardware and specialist staff to operate it. This was the preferred option from the majority of countries who responded.
- 4.2 A dispersed computer system with different countries being responsible for different species. This is the option favoured by South Africa.

Each country would then be responsible for maintaining that system for their own species. This might be placed on an existing computer system and although it would require additional resources, it would use existing expertise on site.

- 4.3 A central computer system located in one member State. UK (Cambridge) mentioned this as a second preference.
- 4.4 An interim solution is for countries to send their data (administrative and technical) to other member states on floppy disk. It should then be possible for recipient states to read this directly on to their database systems. This happens already between France and Spain and is being considered by Israel.

5. Costs

Member states have some experience in the costs of developing and maintaining similar databases to the one proposed. It is possible that an existing system could be adapted for use by UPOV members. The costs are of the following order (these are based on maximum estimates received):-

- 5.1 Development of appropriate software (this may be an adaption of existing system).

Database software + estimated staff time of 6 months to 1 year.

Japan estimates 890,000 US dollars to establish the appropriate software in Japanese. It will cost much more to establish software available in English also.

- 5.2 Entry of back data (assuming that, at least, 50% can be sent in electronic format).

2 years of staff time estimated.

- 5.3 Annual maintenance charge for upkeep of database and maintenance of software.

1 person full-time (or estimates of 24,000 US dollars from Japan).

- 5.4 Costs of computer with appropriate links to international networks.
50,000 US dollars
+10,000 US dollars annually.

6. Recommendation

The Technical Committee are asked to consider recommending that a centralised computer database for access and supply of data by the competent authorities of the UPOV member states is provided.

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