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✓ Mr. A.L. Heard

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TGM/BTM

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Tobacco Germplasm

In the past few weeks I have been approached by 2 people on the potential need for an initiative by the industry to sustain developments of tobacco varieties. They are D.L. Davis of Reynolds and H.D. Papenfus of Rothmans.

The first is proposing some action in the USA to ensure first of all that existing germplasm is not lost and secondly that the wherewithal exists into the future to develop new varieties for new needs. The reasons advanced are:

- (a) Lack of interest by the seed companies and their withdrawal to a large extent from tobacco programmes, and
- (b) Lack of within - University support and Federal support for tobacco variety development in academic institutes. In particular, NCSU, U of K and USDA are cited as major centres of activity in the past, but with little continuity of effort on tobacco today.

Davis is trying to sound out the possibility of an industry-funded trust programme to ensure that the position does not further deteriorate. In the short-term it is claimed that various breeding lines with, for example, blue-mould resistance have been developed, but are now in effect abandoned in the USA. Pressures on use of chemicals, with the parallel absence of an alternative route to off-setting them, are an added issue.


Papenfus, for less specific reasons, is suggesting some action supported through CORESTA, with objectives which I presume would overlap with the US proposal. It is possible that he will raise this for discussion in Greece at the Scientific Commission or in open session. The RJR thoughts would be more likely discussed at the Tobacco Workers' Conference next January, if at all.

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I see little of value coming from any CORESTA action under present arrangements for several years, whilst the spectre of limitations on germplasm distribution from the US remains as a disincentive except for national concerns there.

Nevertheless, the worries underlying such proposals as expressed by others deserve attention. So far, we have been able to rely on external sources for both variety improvement and seed sourcing. It must be questionable for how long this will remain, quite apart from proposals for radical improvement to varieties. Is there a Group strategy for this topic? If so, I would appreciate any guidance on responding to these external enquiries.



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