

# Protocol from the fifty-third PlantLink steering committee meeting

**Date: 05 June 2024, 9:00-12:00**

**Place: Room Svante Arrhenius, Lund University**

*Present:* Svend Christensen, KU (chair); Allan Rasmusson, LU; Jean W.H. Yong (until 10:30), SLU; Abraham Ontiveros Cisneros, LU (PhD students' representative); Esther Kuper, SLU (PhD students' representative); Mariette Andersson, SLU (deputy director); Sofia Marmon, LU; Erik Andreasson, SLU, Vivian Schmitt, LU (PhD students' representative)

Erik Alexandersson, SLU (acting director); Anna Maňourová, SLU (coordinator)

*Online:* Olivier Van Aken, LU (assistant director) – joined at 9:50 am; Andreas Gustavsson Fredlund, SLU (economist) for points 1-6.

*Absent with valid impediment:* Alf Ceplitis, Lantmännen Lantbruk AB; Leif Bülow, LU (vice-chair)

## **1. Opening of the meeting**

Svend Christensen opened the meeting.

## **2. Election of the person in charge of verifying the minutes**

Allan Rasmusson agreed to be the verifier of the minutes.

## **3. Introduction round and welcome of new committee members**

PlantLink Steering Committee members welcomed new members: Esther Kuper, SLU PhD students' representative and Vivian Schmitt, LU PhD students' representative, who will replace Abraham Ontiveros (defending his PhD thesis in September).

## **4. Minutes of the previous meeting**

Svend Christensen reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were approved.

## **5. Messages; Erik Alexandersson, Anna Maňourová**

- Fascination of Plants Day – 868 registered events in 65 countries all over the world; 4 events registered in Sweden: Flower Power organised by LU Botanical garden; and three SASUF-related events – "Connecting Research Priorities: Innovation, sustainability and long-term perspectives in Moringa cultivation", "Elucidating plant-pathogen interactions using genome sequences and open-source tools" and "Will Southern Africa adapt AgriBiologicals? Nordic and African perspectives."
- Building on ESCAPAdE experience, PlantLink is involved in two new Erasmus+ programs – [NewClim](#) (Erik, led by Annie Drottberger and Lotta Nordmark at SLU) and [ADVALUE](#) (Anna, Erik)
- Borgeby Fältdagar – PlantLink will host a panel discussion, "AI for the future of plant breeding and agriculture", on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, from 14:00-14:30 in the SLU tent. Aakash Chawade (SLU) will lead the panel, which will be the start of PlantLink Focus Group on "AI-driven transformation". Other members of the panel: Erik Alexandersson (SLU), Johan Lundmark (Lantmännen), Anders Andersson (Hörtegården), Ulrika Dyrland Martisson (HS Skåne). Erik Andreasson will show the field trials with the gene-edited potato during the days as well.

- Svend Christensen launched NBPPN (Nordic-Baltic Plant Phenotyping Network); please note the annual meeting on the 21st and 22nd of November in Båstad!
- PlantLink's department tour – Erik and Anna have already presented updates on PlantLink and its current activities in the Department of Plant Breeding at SLU. Dpt. of Plant Protection Biology and Biosystems and Technology will follow in autumn. Sofia and Allan will help to arrange a similar activity at LU.
- The Next Newsletter will be released around the 17<sup>th</sup> of June.
- Professor Kazuhiro Sato (plant breeding, domestication) will visit SLU and LU. Presentation and discussion at SLU Alnarp: 30<sup>th</sup> of August, hosted by Roland von Bothmer. Visit at LU: 31<sup>st</sup> of August, hosted by Mats Hansson.
- 27<sup>th</sup> of September – PhD defence of Abraham Ontiveros
- Andreas Sebastian Marquardt – new researcher in Molecular biosciences at Lund University, previously working at CPSC

## **6. Financial status report; Erik Alexandersson, Andreas Gustavsson Fredlund**

Andreas Gustavsson Fredlund presented PlantLink's budget report. According to the prognosis, there will be about 166,000 SEK surplus at the end 2024. The potential use of this amount is discussed in the next points.

## **7. PlantLink's funding opportunities; Erik Alexandersson, Olivier Van Aken**

There has been no news on the "Centrumsatsningar för ökad beredskap och konkurrenskraft i livsmedelssystemet" application from SLU, where the LTV faculty was represented by Beatrix Alsanius. Cecilia Tullberg and Jeanette Purhagen developed a collaborative application for the LU side, where SLU (Åsa Grimberg and Cecilia Hammenhag) is also collaborating; PlantLink's involvement is yet to be validated but appears positive.

There are no updates from FSI (Sektionen Forskning, samverkan och innovation) and Lisa Thelin, LU. However, the previous annual LU samverkan call might be released – Allan and Olivier will check with Lisa again. Other funding possibilities include applications for smaller funds, e.g. to cover annual meetings.

Erik will meet with Jonatan Leo at NordGen to receive input on the Formas communication grant application for plant blindness. All partners are optimistic about next year's application.

## **8. Update on Focus groups with roundtable discussions, PlantLink Day 2024; Erik Alexandersson, Anna Maňourová**

Two focus groups are being formed on the themes of "Preserving biodiversity and reducing pesticide use in agriculture" and "Advancing plant bioinformatics, agri-tech, and crop phenotyping in AI-driven transformation." Aakash Chawade (SLU) has consented to lead the "AI-driven transformation" group, which he is now developing with the help of PlantLink. Borgeby Fältdagar's panel discussion could be seen as the start of the discussions in this group. The "Preserved biodiversity" group does not yet have a leader, though many researchers and one industry member have expressed interest in joining the team. The Steering Committee discussed possible leaders for the "Preserved biodiversity" group. Anna will contact them as soon as possible.

Ideally, the groups will be created by the end of June, with Anna and Erik preparing the necessary templates and other materials in July so that the groups can begin their activities in September.

## **9. PlantLink Day 2024; Anna Maňourová**

Registration for PlantLink Day 2024 is now open. Four presenters have confirmed their attendance: Vivi Vajda (Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet), Karl Ljung (LU), Teun Dekker (SLU), and Madeleine Fogde (SIANI). Vivi and Karl will provide regular presentations, while Teun and Madeleine have agreed to be interviewed on stage by Erik and Anna. The rest of the agenda will be allocated to Focus Group presentations and open/panel discussions. Furthermore, the programme should incorporate flash news highlighting recent major grants and publications.

The Steering Committee investigated prospective event titles. Anna will update the PlantLink Day name, obtain the titles of speakers' presentations, and finish the programme before the end of June.

Vivian and Karl's presentations can be included in the Biology seminar series. *AP (action point):* Olivier will look into the possibilities. It would be great to invite high school/secondary teachers to attend the event; *AP:* Olivier and Allan will contact some. *AP:* Allan will also check the availability of the Red Room in case PlantLink Day draws a similar/larger number of attendees than last year.

## **10. The current status of PlantLink and workload; Erik Alexandersson**

The time available for PlantLink activities has been reduced in the management team. Anna is down to 30% (40% with NordPlant included), while Erik and Olivier are at 5% in kind. Erik, Olivier and Anna will try to set up meetings with the heads of the LU and SLU departments to discuss PlantLink's future (2025 and beyond), focusing on collaboration prospects, how to attract funds and donors, and proving PlantLink's strengths as a networking platform with a large database of contacts. Potential forces collaborating with other SLU/LU networks will be further explored.

## **11. Discussion of possible funding of memberships for 2025; Erik Alexandersson**

PlantLink has the possibility to use the surplus money to help pay for various membership fees, including EPSO (9,000 EUR), PBN (22,000 SEK, in its run), NBPPN (15,000 SEK, beginning of the new year), SPPS (7,500 SEK, beginning of the new year). All of these fees fit into the anticipated budget surplus.

Decision: To allow the use of the surplus money to help pay for various current membership fees

## **12. PlantLink's social media impact last year; Anna Maňourová**

PlantLink's social media engagement decreased due to the management team's lowered capacities. However, the LinkedIn page is constantly growing in followers, and PlantLink's newsletter still has a nearly 50% opening rate. The webpage has had fewer visitors than usual (11,000 unique visitors), while the average has been roughly 25% higher.

## **13. EPSO General Assembly; Anna Maňourová**

Jens Sundström and Anna will represent the SLU-LU-UU cluster at the EPSO General Assembly 2024 in Oeiras, Portugal, from June 11 to 12. Jens joined the Steering meeting online. He highlighted EPSO's actions last year and provided updates from the "Agricultural Technologies" working group. The GA handout was shared with the Committee. Jens and Anna will create a brief report from the GA, which will be distributed to the Committee and cluster members.

## **14. Any other business**

The annual report will not be done this summer, but a shorter report will be done at the end of the year.

**15. Next meetings**

24<sup>th</sup> of September, Alnarp, 9:00-12:00 and 5<sup>th</sup> December at 9-11:30 in Lund prior to the PlantLink day.

**16. Closing of the meeting**

Svend Christensen closed the meeting.

Signed by

Anna Maňourová – secretary

Allan Rasmusson – verifier of the minutes

Svend Christensen – chair

# Signature page

This document has been electronically signed  
using eduSign.

eduSign