

Protocol from the PlantLink steering committee meeting

Time **Wednesday 14 June 2023 13:00-17:00**

Place **Spiltan, SLU Alnarp**

Present:

Thomas Moritz, UCPH, chair
Erik Andreasson, SLU
John Yong, SLU
Mariette Andersson, SLU
Leif Bülow, LU (vice chair), from 15:00
Erik Alexandersson, SLU
Sofia Marmon, LU
Allan Rasmusson, LU
Federico Gómez, LU (director)
Erik Alexandersson, SLU (assistant director)
Svante Resjö, SLU (secretary)

Representatives declared unable to participate: Johanna Osterman (PhD, SLU), Abraham Ontiveros Cisneros (PhD, LU), Alf Ceplitis (Lantmännen), Carl Jonson (Region Skåne), Anna Manourova (coordinator, SLU), Andreas Fredlund (economist, SLU)

1. The meeting is open

Thomas Moritz opened the meeting.

2. Selection of secretary

Svante Resjö was elected to take the notes.

3. Selection of the person to check the meeting minutes

Sofia Marmon was elected to review the minutes.

4. Review of the previous meeting minutes (Annex 1)

Thomas Moritz reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting, and the minutes were approved.

5. Information (Federico Gómez, Erik Alexandersson)

Federico Gómez: Fascination of Plants Day was successful with a good mix of topics and participants; about 80 participants attended. Anna Manourova has written an online article about it, available on PlantLink's homepage.

Erik Alexandersson: Ramesh Vetukuri will be representing PlantLink at the EPSO 24th general meeting. We also now have other representatives in the Future Proofed Crops ELLS Working Group: Mats Hansson (LU), Olivier Van Aken (LU), Siri Caspersen (SLU) and Anders Carlsson (SLU).

There have been problems with PlantLink's home page and Twitter flow, but that is fixed now. PlantLink is also supporting various meetings and societies, and in the upcoming weeks, there will

be one joint meeting on crop breeding and biotechnology with ARC South Africa and one in Alnarp between the Danish and Swedish Plant Pathology societies.

6. Budget discussion. Federico Gómez; Erik Alexandersson

• Overview and projections for surplus at LU and deficit at SLU at the end of the year

At the end of the year, SLU is estimated to have a 39,000 SEK deficit, and LU a 453,000 surplus. Andreas Fredlund has asked if LU can transfer money to SLU from the LU Department of Biology, but this seems problematic. The meeting discussed the reason for the distribution of surplus and deficit. Thomas Moritz stated that we need to know from LU if we can use the surplus during 2024. From the SLU side, it should be possible.

• How administration can handle potential external money for PL? For example, from companies.

Federico Gómez asked how we should deal with this type of funding. It can be complicated. Support for the PlantLink Day was discussed; it should still be possible if no direct monetary funds are transferred; there is already a model for that. The meeting discussed other financing options for the PlantLink Day.

7. Elaborate a document detailing what PL can offer to different stakeholders

Federico Gómez suggested creating a document detailing what PL can offer to different stakeholders. It could contain material from the 10-year report, and Anna could send out a questionnaire to get responses from stakeholders that can be used for such a document. Erik Alexandersson pointed out that we did a survey for the 10-year report. Sofia Marmon recapitulated the findings from that survey: back to basics. Stakeholders like the Newsletter and the PlantLink Day. Contact between industry and academia is important. Erik Andreasson pointed out that we have done these surveys before and may not need to do one again. The meeting decided not to survey again.

The participants discussed the possibility of using a fee-based system to fund PlantLink's activities. Should PL make a sketch of a fee-based system? This relates to the possibility of PlantLink becoming a part of Partnership Alnarp (PA), i.e. that PlantLink could become a theme within PA. This could preserve the Newsletter, the PlantLink Day, and maybe additional activities. But Allan Rasmusson and Federico Gómez questioned what that would mean for the relationship between LU and PlantLink. The meeting discussed if a similar organisation at LU corresponds to Partnerskap Alnarp and identified LU Innovation as a possible partner. Plant Biologicals Network was also discussed, but they are a different type of organisation with a stronger focus on public opinion and policy compared to PL. The discussion was paused until Leif Bülow could join the meeting. Point 7 was discussed in between.

Leif Bülow suggested that joining PA would make PlantLink a more commercial actor. In that case, the question could be raised with LU Innovation to contribute, and that might make it possible to continue the LU - SLU cooperation in PlantLink on more equal terms. Leif Bülow will bring the subject up with them at a meeting on 15 June. Erik Alexandersson will inform Håkan Schroeder that discussions are ongoing. Leif also brought up EIT Food as a collaborator. Federico Gómez will bring the issue up with Eva Norberg Karlsson at EIT Food.

Federico Gómez will talk with Anna Manourova about the document mentioned above. This could be done with the help of Anna Lehrman at SLU crowdfunding.

8. PlantLink business model from autumn and in the future

• Should the PL day have a fee? Sponsors for coffee break/lunch/tickets?

Sofia Marmon said that most academics are okay with a small fee. Federico Gómez suggested students free, researchers 1,000-1,500 SEK, companies 2,000-3,000. The participants discussed

the issue, noting that the administrative cost for handling fees is large. Federico Gómez – the PlantLink Day is highly prioritised; a fee will help keep it alive. Thomas Moritz: we may not have time to implement it for the next annual meeting. The participants discussed the sponsoring solutions of other organisations similar to PlantLink. **Decision on fee:** There should be a no-show fee, with a warning email sent out about two weeks before the start of the event. This information should also be added to the registration web page.

9. Vinnova application (<https://www.vinnova.se/en/calls-for-proposals/ett-nytt-recept-format-systemet-uppbyggnadsfas/a-new-recipe-for-the-food-system-structure/>)

• If would PL would apply, would PL be the main applicant? Or part of a consortium?

The participants discussed this possibility. Co-funding might be a problem, but it is unclear from the call how much. At least three stakeholders are needed, so we would have to find collaborators. This depends on what plans other organisations have. Thomas Moritz: It would be good to join an existing consortium rather than starting our own from scratch.

10. Discussions of PL potential strategic partnerships for the future

• Discussion with Partnership Alnarp (Federico Gómez; Erik Alexandersson)

• Agri-tech? (Erik Alexandersson)

• Approach the medical faculty? (Erik Alexandersson; Federico Gómez)

Some of these issues had been partly discussed earlier (Point 6). Erik Alexandersson informed about agri-tech collaborations. The medical faculty: Erik Alexandersson: Plant Breeding dpt/Anders Carlsson has had an ongoing discussion with the medical faculty in Lund about functional food. Could PlantLink be involved in this discussion and secure funding that way?

Federico Gómez: we can do it, however, it is a bit unlikely that they will give us direct financing, but they might open up for other applications. Thomas Moritz: we will keep this in mind for the future.

11. Discussions with the head of departments about membership fees (Erik Alexandersson)

These discussions are ongoing. John Yong: it is unlikely that BT will make direct contributions, partly because of the uncertain outcome of the restructuring of the LTV faculty at SLU Alnarp. Erik Alexandersson and Erik Andreasson said that VSB and VF are more positive. John Yong: Why not at the LTV level – answer: the faculty sees it as an issue for the departments. At the LU side, Allan Rasmusson has spoken to the previous head of the department. Based on discussions within LU departments, it is unlikely that they will contribute to financing. PlantLink might have to stop paying membership fees to EPSO (SLUGS cluster) and Plant Biologicals Network. **The meeting decided that PlantLink will stop paying EPSO and Plant Biologicals Network membership fees.** The participants discussed individual options and how fees for LU and SLU could be covered in the future.

12. Re-structure of PL management

Federico Gómez informed the participants that he will step down as director of PlantLink in the middle of September. Thomas Moritz: We need someone from LU to take over Federico's role. Leif Bülow, Sofia Marmon and Allan Rasmusson are to discuss among themselves if one of them is prepared to take over. It will be further discussed in the next steering committee meeting in the middle of September.

Anna Manourova is employed at SLU until the end of the year. One option would be to employ her at the LU as a coordinator. **Allan Rasmusson will check if this is possible.**

Allan Rasmusson: What happens to the board after the end of December? The board was appointed by the faculties until the end of 2023; who will appoint the new board?

The meeting decided that Anna Manourova will be responsible for the annual report, and alternative time plans were discussed either for a standard report to be finalised until the next

PlantLink day, 5 October, or to be finalized later during autumn and then to cover also the autumn semester of 2023. It was decided that Anna will have the final say in this matter. Migration of the homepage was also discussed, but it was decided that the timepoint was not right and that this migration would be better as part of a possible transition process.

13. Meeting finishes

Thomas Moritz closed the meeting.

Thomas Moritz, chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Sofia', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sofia Marmon, attestant

Svante Resjö, secretary

Signature page

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