



Meeting Minutes: Ottawa, ON – July 13, 2014

Preface

In the last twelve months the North American oat research community has experienced significant pressure from internal and external drivers to reconsider its ways of working and its own leadership behaviors and dynamics:

- The CORE initiative has come to its natural end and has delivered large datasets, a mature, published SNP chip, and a mature iteration of a comprehensive oat consensus map.
- The overall plant breeding and genetic fields have been shaken from their foundations by the tremendous advancement in genotyping and phenotyping that have propelled all crops, main and orphan, into the so-called “era of big data”.
- Public funding continued to decline for oat research and a resurgent interest by the milling community to support and help guiding the community has manifested itself in various discussions and interactions aimed at setting new direction.
- The public research community in oat has become smaller and global cooperation across boundaries is now fundamental to reaching a critical mass of experts to drive progress.
- Oat has come back under public interest due to its nutritional value.

The community has been initially brought together around the idea of revitalizing the “Avena Toolbox”, a shared database for genomic information, and the “Oat Newsletter”, a non-refereed publication of the American Oat Worker Conference. Through the enthusiasm of various contributors and the strong sponsorship of USDA-ARS, AAFC, NAMA, and POGA four initiatives have taken shape and worked as catalysts for additional discussions and interactions:

1. The so-called TCAP database has been expanded to include oat alongside wheat and barley as a global repository for breeding and genomic information. NIFA is contributing access to the platform, USDA-ARS and AAFC technical skills, and NAMA and POGA together funding for a dedicated employee to support data curation and populate the initial database.
2. The AOWC Newsletter has been redesigned, an editorial committee appointed which includes international colleagues, and the historical archive digitized and published. The Oat Newsletter will actively solicit contributions beyond the AOWC.
3. NAMA has created a sub-group of its Technical Committee entirely focused on oat genetics and breeding, the Oat Genomics Technical Committee, which is charged with bringing cohesive leadership from the North American based oat millers to the public research community.
4. Ultimately, the Oat Global portal was created as new identity for the global community, aspirationally well beyond North America, and provides access to multiple data and informational platforms.



Oat Global

...your oat information portal

Within this framework of multiple evolving dynamics, a meeting was called ahead of the AOWC meeting in Ottawa, Ontario, initially with the goal of building structure to the Oat Global initiative, starting from but not limited to its initial focus on the development of the oat TCAP database and the Oat Global portal itself.

Meeting Participants

Gabe Gusmini (PepsiCo), Joe Lutz (General Mills), Bruce Roskens (Grain Millers), Ben Boroughs (NAMA), Jim Dyck (POGA), Jack Okamuro (USDA-ARS), Jean-Luc Jannink (USDA-ARS), Dave Matthews (USDA-ARS), Gerard Lazo (USDA-ARS), Kathy Klos (USDA-ARS), Nicholas Tinker (AAFC), Catherine Howarth (Aberystwyth University), Pamela Zwer (SARDI), Marcelo Texeira-Pacheco (UFRGS)

The participants represented the global oat research community either by their business interest, public research remit, or by their desire to act as bridges between this group and local communities close to their own location.

Discussions and Resolutions

Gabe Gusmini provided an introduction to the meeting that summarized the elements reported in the preface to this document. Bruce Roskens confirmed the availability of funding from NAMA and POGA for the Oat Data Curator as a part-time role to be assigned to the appropriate candidate within USDA/Cornell lab lead by Jean-Luc Jannink. The discussion then progressed rapidly towards defining a path forward which resulted in the following conclusions and resolutions.

Committees

Two committees have been created to lead Oat Global at large (Oat Global Strategy Committee) and to manage the specific and currently active initiative around databases (Oat Global Database Project Team). The OG Strategy Committee has overarching responsibility and the OG Database Project Team reports hierarchically to it. Further committees might be created in the future to lead new projects that the Strategy Committee wishes to foster.

Membership in the two committees is as follows and may evolve over future meetings as necessary.

OG Strategy Committee

Members: Jack Okamuro, Jim Dyck, Ben Boroughs, Joe Lutz, Gabe Gusmini, Bruce Roskens, Pamela Zwer, Catherine Howarth, Luiz Federizzi, Nick Tinker.

Pamela Zwer volunteered to provide a link between this group and the Australian and Asian communities. Catherine Howarth volunteered to provide a link between this group and the European community. Luiz Federizzi (absent) will be asked to kindly agree to create a link between this group and the Latin American community.

The aim will be at reducing the size of the OG Strategy Committee once the community has reached a higher level of cohesiveness and maturity as one group.



Oat Global

...your oat information portal

This committee will provide the strategic vision for the future, will sign-off on plans and initiatives, and will provide a link into public and private funding for supporting the various initiatives that it intends to stimulate and sponsor.



Oat Global

...your oat information portal

OG Database Project team

Members: Jean-Luc Jannink, Gerard Lazo, Dave Matthews, Nick Tinker, Kathy Klos, Oat Data Curator (to be hired).

This team will report to the OG Strategy Committee and will be responsible for executing the development and commissioning of the Oat Global portal and database. Over time the committee will recommend how to provide oversight and regular maintenance to the platform once established.

This team will maintain a fluid membership and enlist colleagues as necessary to make the initiative a success: the team will not need approval to do so by the OG Strategy Committee but will provide transparency via regular updates.

This team is delegated by the OG Strategy Committee to secure the transfer of funding for the Oat Data Curator from NAMA/POGA to the appropriate legal entity between USDA-ARS and Cornell University and to hire the most qualified candidate.

Database and Portal Contents

It is agreed that the first instance of the databases will include the CORE datasets, the Uniform Nursery datasets, and other datasets volunteered by their owners, if deemed appropriate by the OG Database Project Team.

The Oat Global Portal will provide access to the database, to the archive and new editions of the AOWC Newsletter, and to other spaces for the management of community's information and knowledge. Over time the portal will grow to include other sources of information and virtual spaces for forums and interactions.

Conclusions

Oat Global started as a database, evolved into a portal concept, and is now a full-fledged international forum that provides the opportunity of driving advancement in the breeding and genetics spaces in oats across public and private organizations worldwide.

Next Steps

The two committees will meet independently within the next 60 days to generate a charter (OG Strategy Committee) and a resource and plan (OG Database Project Team). The two committees will hold a joint session to assess progress thereafter.

The OG Database Project Team will proceed to hire the Oat Data Curator ideally by September 2014 and to progress the development of the portal and database as described above.