

Preface

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The 19th Triennial Conference of the European Association for Potato Research (EAPR) was held in Brussels, Belgium, from 6 to 11 July 2014. This event was co-organized by the “Walloon Agricultural Research Center” (CRA-W) in Gembloux, Belgium, and the “Interprovinciaal Proefcentrum voor de Aardappelteelt” (PCA/INAGRO) in Kruishoutem/Rumbeke-Beitem, Belgium. Other organizational contributors were the universities (UCL, UGent, ULg-Gbx, KUL/BDB) and scientific or technical institutions (ILVO, FIWAP, CARAH and Belgapom), as well as the Flemish and Walloon governments.

The main overarching theme was the durability of the potato crop and its industry, an essential dimension that includes economic, environmental and food security and safety issues at the world level. The potato processing sector is very developed within the production basin of Western Europe and particularly in Belgium. The Belgian potato crop and potato industry have been rapidly developing during the last 15 years. The area cropped to potato has increased nearly 33% in that period. Belgium is now number 1 in the world for export of frozen potato products and in the top 3 for production, representing more than 3.5 million tons of processed potatoes per year.

This conference was being held for the first time in Belgium and represented an excellent opportunity for the Belgian potato industry, as well as for the research institutions and private companies which were eager to share their scientific and technical know-how.

The scientific topics of the conference focused on all classical aspects of potato production and sales, with special attention for the latest knowledge about sustainable and innovative techniques. New insights into fundamental research and applied research results were presented on genomics, breeding, and phenotyping. Together with diseases and plant protection, these topics represented more than 50% of the contributions from delegates. Other important and detailed subjects were recent advances in agronomy, physiology and seed potato production (20% of the contributions). New insights into post-harvest, storage, tuber quality and nutritional aspects were also addressed (15% of the contributions). Finally, more recent but essential topics of potato production were discussed, such as precision agriculture, biological control of potato

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diseases and pests, socio-economics of the potato, the role of potato in global food security, and the connection of research with practice.

The conference programme was structured around 14 keynote lectures by invited speakers, 131 oral presentations grouped into 22 concurrent scientific sessions, 6 thematic mini-workshops, a permanent poster session with 172 posters, 6 scientific and cultural excursions through the Belgian potato area, and a rich social programme.

The 410 delegates (amongst them 373 scientists) from 56 different countries came mainly from Europe (80%), but the organizers were also delighted to host delegations from Africa (5%), Asia (5%), North America (5%), Latin America (4%) and Oceania (1%). We were especially pleased to host 14 representatives of the International Potato Center (CIP) led by the Deputy Director for Development Dr. Oscar Ortiz, of the Potato Association of America (PAA) led by the President Prof. dr. Nora Olsen, of the African Potato Association (APA) led by the President Dr. Endale Gebre, and of the “Asociacion Latinoamericana de la Papa” (ALAP).

European participants came from 27 different countries; the top 5 best represented countries included Belgium (19%), the Netherlands (11%), France (9%), Germany (7%), and the UK (7%). During this conference, three “Best Poster Awards” were attributed, based on a vote by the participants, to Dr. R. Thieme (first prize) and Dr. K. Rudack (second prize) of the Julius Kühn Institute in Germany for their respective works on the Colorado beetle and potato resistance to drought. The third prize was attributed to Dr. Beury-Cirou of Siple in France for her contribution with the CNRS and the RD3PT on the biocontrol including the evaluation of the effects of biological control agents in greenhouse and in the field against the bacterial agents of the black leg and the wet decay.

This special issue of *Potato Research* presents the full paper contributions or the abstracts of the given keynote lectures. We thank the invited speakers for their written contribution. Summary and outcomes of five of the six workshops held during the conference are also included, as well as the outcomes of a meeting organized by Dr. André Devaux and his colleagues from CIP aiming to reinforce further the collaboration with EAPR.

I wish you a fruitful and enjoyable reading of this special issue of our scientific journal and invite you to join the 20th Triennial EAPR Conference in Versailles (France) in 2017 from the 9th to the 14th of July!