Introduction

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This *Microbial Ecology* special issue contains a compilation of peer-reviewed papers presented at the II International Conference on Environmental, Industrial and Applied Microbiology (BioMicroWorld2007) held in Seville (Spain) on 28 November to 1 December 2007, where over 550 researches of about 60 countries attended and presented their cutting edge research.

The main goals of this meeting were to (1) identify new approaches and research opportunities in applied microbiology presenting works that linked microbiology with research areas usually related with other scientific and engineering disciplines, (2) consolidate international collaborative efforts, and (3) communicate current research priorities and progress in the field.

There were many excellent presentations in the several conference sessions and plenary lectures. The conference was structured in four main sessions covering the topics: (1) Environmental, Marine, Aquatic Microbiology/Geomicrobiology; (2) Agriculture, Soil, Forest Microbiology; (3) Food Microbiology; and (4) Industrial Microbiology/Future Bioindustries. Four additional special sessions were dedicated to: (1) Bioremediation, (2) Microbial Production of Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals/Biosurfactants/Biotechnologically Relevant Enzymes and Proteins, (3) Medical and Pharmaceutical Microbiology, and (4) Techniques and Methods/ Microbiology Education.

The lectures presented by the three plenary speakers can be highlighted as good examples of modern interdisciplinary

applied microbiology: Dr. J.L. Ramos Martín, from the CSIC-Spanish National Research Council (Granada, Spain), presented the lecture titled “The toluene paradox: to eat, to tolerate or to run away.” Dr. M.L. González-Martín, from the Biosurfaces and Interfacial Phenomena Group of the Department of Applied Physics, UEX (Badajoz, Spain), expounded on “Physico-chemistry of microbial adhesion to materials: from macroscopic surface thermodynamics to modern nano-scale technology.” Finally, Dr. Riitta Puupponen-Pimiä, from the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland (Espoo, Finland), presented the lecture titled “Antimicrobial and antiadhesion properties of bioactive berry compounds.”

This special issue is made up of the works presented in some of the above-mentioned sessions but clearly bearing in mind the scope of *Microbial Ecology*, that is, how microorganisms interact with their biotic and abiotic environments, with each other and with their neighbors and hosts, to carry out their diverse functions. As a result of it, an interesting issue is presented here.

We hope readers will find this issue interesting and helpful to their research purposes and helps to consolidate the conference as a regular research meeting in the field. It has been a pleasure to put together this special issue in *Microbial Ecology* journal. We would like to thank all members of the Organizing and Scientific Advisory Committees for the work made during the conference preparation. We would also like to thank all the contributing authors for sharing their knowledge and research, as well as all the reviewers for their advice, which certainly helped to improve the quality, accuracy, and relevance of this publication. Lastly, we would like to thank Dr. Karen Nelson, Editor-in-Chief, and Springer for giving us the opportunity to produce this special issue.

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