



European Plant Science Organisation
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PRESS RELEASE

Plant Research to Save the Planet

Brussels, 12 August 2009

A Global Plant Council has been formed as part of an historic and groundbreaking summit of major plant science societies from around the world. EPSO as a large European plant science organisation will take a strong role in shaping the agenda and work of the council.

Twenty-one scientists representing 13 major plant science societies from around the world gathered in Honolulu (USA) on July 15-16, 2009 at a summit organised by the American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB). They explored ways in which plant scientists can come together to address global concerns such as world hunger, energy, climate change, health and wellbeing, sustainability, and environmental protection. The mission of the Global Plant Council will be to define and engage in coordinated strategies to address these critical issues and to increase awareness of the central role of plant science in their resolution. The shared vision and unified effort of plant scientists from all regions of the world will enable the most effective use of knowledge and resources to tackle the major challenges of food security and human health confronting all nations in the 21st century.

As stated by Dr Kasem Zaki Ahmed, representing the African Crop Science Society: "The world relies on only ten major crops to provide 95% of the food consumed by humans and farm animals. To mitigate problems that Africa is facing we must improve existing crops and develop new ones with higher yields and greater resistance to pests, pathogens, drought, and other environmental stresses."

Plant biology – and thus plant science research – is central to other global challenges as well. Dr Wilhelm Gruissem, president of the European Plant Science Organisation, noted: "We must address the key issues of biodiversity in natural and managed environments." Dr Zhihong Xu, president of the Chinese Society of Plant Physiologists noted: "We need to increase the search for and investment in the discovery and development of new and existing bioactive compounds and medicines from a diversity of plant species."

The newly formed Global Plant Council will move forward to create partnerships and collaborations that tackle and solve what we all recognise as critical and immediate problems for our planet.

"The Global Plant Council is the first step that plant scientists across the globe have taken to speak with one voice on the pressing challenges that face humankind," said Mel Oliver, summit moderator.

EPSO President Wilhelm Gruissem and EPSO Executive Director Karin Metzloff were joined at the summit by colleagues representing plant societies from North America, Asia, Africa, Australasia, and South America.

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Useful links

Press release webpage: www.epsoweb.org/commun/Global_Plant_Council_Launch_EPSO_Press_Release_12Aug09.pdf

About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 204 research institutes, departments and universities from 29 countries in Europe and beyond. EPSO's mission is to improve the impact and visibility of plant science in Europe. www.epsoweb.org