

World's leading experts on maize crop pests gather to share latest research to help safeguard food security

More than 70 of the world's leading experts on maize crop pests have shared the very latest research to help safeguard food security as part of the [28th International Working Group on Ostrinia and other maize pests \(IWGO\) Conference](#), which was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 2nd to 4th of May 2023. Scientists from Canada, USA, China, and various countries in Europe and Africa, gathered to present their research and recommendations on how to tackle maize insect pests including the fall armyworm and the western corn rootworm. The [International Organization of Biological Control](#) (IOBC) – the parent organization of IWGO – co-hosted the conference together with the [Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service](#) (KEPHIS) in Nairobi, Kenya. They were supported by [CABI's regional centre for Africa](#).

The conference was convened by Dr Ulrich Kuhlmann, Executive Director, Global Operations at CABI, and co-convened by Dr Tom Sappington, of the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), and Professor Wang Zhenying of the Institute of Plant Protection, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS). In attendance at the opening ceremony, Professor Theophilus M. Mutui, Managing Director, KEPHIS, said, “The conference has identified constraining factors and investments needed for management of the pests of interest and creation of a strong network.” “The wealth of knowledge, experiences, expertise and technology I see in the representation in this conference and the line-up of the programme is what we need.”



Photo: KCS Convention Service

The programme was organised into seven Scientific Sessions covering a range of topics including the role of lepidopteran pests in contaminating corn ears with mycotoxins; advances in biological control, host-plant resistance, and IPM for management of fall armyworm; genomics for understanding and controlling maize pests; and the challenges and opportunities involved in managing invasive pests of

maize. Each of the 53 speakers gave a 10-minute talk, with an additional 10 minutes to answer questions and engage in discussion, which was typically quite lively and productive. In addition, 13 posters were displayed throughout the week with a special time set aside for discussion with the presenters.

Meanwhile, a number of young scientists attended the conference and presented their research topics, and five of them received the IOBC Global Travel Award: (1) Helena Viric Gasparic, University of Zagreb, Croatia; (2) Sri Ita Tarigan, University of Gödöllő, Hungary; (3) Emmanuel Peter, International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, Kenya; (4) Emily Bick, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA; and (5) Ahmed G. Hussain, Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands

At the close of the Conference, it was announced that long-time Co-convenors Prof Zhenying Wang (17 years) and Dr Tom Sappington (12 years) will be retiring soon, and will therefore step away from their roles in IWGO. Dr Feng Zhang of CABI in Beijing, China, and Dr Dominic Reisig of North Carolina State University, USA, have graciously agreed to take on the Co-Convenorships. They have both been active members of IWGO, and are looking forward to serving the IWGO community of scientists in this capacity.



Photo: KCS Convention Service

Co-convenors Prof Zhenying Wang and Dr Tom Sappington with Convenor Dr Ulli Kuhlmann

