

Meeting

Caribbean Division Heads to San Jose, Costa Rica



The Caribbean Division Annual Meeting was held at the end of February 2017 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Corobici in San Jose, Costa Rica. With approximately 100 participants from 12 countries and territories, 45 oral paper presentations and 31 posters were presented during the meeting.

The meeting theme was, Crop Losses, Phytosanitary Risk, and Tropical Diseases: Advances and Challenges. The meeting format included a two-day general session, followed by a special Wednesday session on “Advances and challenges for the banana sector from the plant pathological point of view.” Conference organizers were **Mónica Blanco**, **Paul Esker**, **Danny Humphreys**, **Adriana Murillo**, and **Alvaro Ureña**, from the University of Costa Rica, and **Mauricio Guzman**, Corporación Bananera Nacional (CORBANA).

The conference inauguration included a welcome from **Felipe Arauz**, minister of agriculture and livestock, Costa Rica. APS President **Tim Murray** presented his address on, “Changing Landscapes in Plant Pathology,” while **Paul Esker**, APS Caribbean Division president, spoke about the goals and objectives for the meeting. Lastly, **Fernando Garcia**, vice president of research, University of Costa Rica (UCR), gave participants a warm welcome on behalf of the UCR.

Monday’s first session focused on four keynote talks that addressed the different meeting themes. The first talk was presented by **Peter Cotty**, USDA ARS and the University of Arizona, and was entitled, “Region-wide aflatoxin reductions for improved food security, income and health.” **Inga Zasada**, USDA ARS, presented the second talk on “75 years of potato cyst nematodes in the United States: A case study for quarantine pests,” while **Gerardina Umaña**, from UCR, presented a talk about “New approaches to control post-harvest rot in fruits.” **Carlos Urias**, from the Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA), presented a talk on the “Main phytosanitary problems in the countries of the OIRSA region.”

On Tuesday morning, the day started with the Caribbean Division meeting. The meeting focused on the current state of the budget for the division, as well as financial matters related to the conference. There was also time to discuss upcoming meetings, including the next Caribbean Division meeting, to be held in Termas de Chillán, Region del Biobío, Chile, in October 2017.

Following the business meeting, the Graduate Student Paper Session was held with seven student speakers, representing Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States, presenting their thesis research projects. First place was awarded to **Rebecca Sandoval**, UCR, for her talk, “Distribution and frequency of the phytopathogenic nematodes associated with potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) in the Province of Cartago, Costa Rica.” Second place was awarded to **Sandra**



Berenice Juárez, Chapingo Autonomous University, for her talk, “*Colletotrichum fruticola* as causal agent of anthracnose in avocado produced in Mexico, management with biological and antifungal compounds.” Third place was presented to **Derek Barchenger**, New Mexico State University, for his talk, “Characterization of *Phytophthora capsici* in Taiwan using a universal host differential.” The organizing committee would like to extend special thanks to the judges of that competition: **Peter Cotty**, **Ronald French**, **Adriana Murillo**, **Tim Murray**, **Berlin Nelson**, and **Inga Zasada**.

Wednesday’s special session on banana was open not just to conference participants but also those working in the banana sector. The keynote talk for this session was delivered by **Miguel Dita**, Embrapa Brazil, and was entitled “Fusarium tropical race 4 and its threat to food security and the banana industry in Latin America and the Caribbean.” Additional talks focused on disease diagnostics, biological control, plant disease epidemiology, and issues related to post-harvest storage and disease control across different pathogen groups. The special session also provided participants with two open discussion periods to expand on different specific themes in order to identify needs and areas for research and extension in the future.

Overall, the meeting provided participants with many opportunities to interact with old and new friends alike. Conference participants indicated that they really enjoyed the meeting, especially the high diversity of work presented, both in terms of different plant pathogens and diseases, as well as different host species. Without a doubt, the meeting was a success and the organizing committee would like to say thank you to the sponsors of the meeting, including ISASA, SuAgro, Corbana, OIRSA, ClearDetections, and Agdia. ■