

Plant Disease Management Workshop: Stevia, in the quest of sweetness... Plant diseases appear!

Andres D. Sanabria-Velazquez¹, Javier E. Barua-Chamorro², Alberto A. Cubilla-Rios², Guillermo A. Enciso-Maldonado³, Marco Maidana-Ojeda³, H. David Shew¹

¹Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA.

²Facultad de Ciencias Químicas, Universidad Nacional de Asunción, San Lorenzo, Paraguay.

³Centro de Desarrollo e Innovación Tecnológica de Itapúa, Hohenau, Itapúa, Paraguay

E-mail address: adsanabr@ncsu.edu

Stevia (Stevia rebaudiana) is a specialty crop and an important alternative for Paraguayan smallholder farmers generating income for more than 30% of rural families. Even though Paraguay has good conditions for stevia production, farmers have difficulties producing crops efficiently. The main constraints are yield losses caused by plant diseases and the inappropriate identification and use of pesticides to control these diseases. In Paraguay there is not updated information on disease diagnostic and management protocols. For this reason, training in the “new” techniques of disease diagnostic and pathogen identification is necessary. The American Phytopathological Society (APS) provides valuable resources for extension and education such as OIP Global Experience Award which allowed us to carry a workshop aiming to provide hands on experience on diagnostics and management for stevia diseases to Paraguayan farmers, researchers, extension agents and students. Two workshops were carried out, one in Facultad de Ciencias Químicas, Universidad Nacional de Asunción, Paraguay and the other in Facultad de Agronomía “Universidad Católica Nuestra Señora de la Asunción”, MA, Itapúa, Paraguay. A total of 55 participants attended included extension agents, faculty, public investigators, stevia producers, private consultants and graduate students with a direct interest in diagnostic techniques. The workshop consisted of presentations and hands on lab practices in which the participants had the chance to learn more about common stevia diseases and techniques for their identification.