

## SASPP Congress 2009

*Prepared by Quentin Santana*

In January of this year, staff and students representing the TPCP and CTHB attended the 46<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Southern African Society of Plant Pathology (SASPP) held at the Villa Via Hotel in Gordons Bay. The congress also hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the African Mycological Association concurrently with the SASPP congress. These meetings allowed both staff and students from institutions around South Africa and Africa to present their work to the plant pathology community as well as giving all the opportunity to develop their projects and professional ties with other organisations.

In total 42 staff and students members of the TPCP/CTHB research programmes attended the meetings, presenting 22 oral papers and 14 poster presentations. The presentations given by members of the TPCP and CTHB programmes, ranged in topic from the development of new techniques such as microsatellite discovery to the range and diversity of pathogens of various tree species in South Africa and the African continent.

A general emphasis was placed on disease detection, management and control at the congress. These important ideas were reinforced by talks from invited international guests to the conference, giving everyone insight into how other institutions deal with plant diseases.

Members of the TPCP and CTHB can be proud of the quality of work presented at the two congresses. Irene Barnes a PhD student of FABI, won the best student presentation of the congress for her talk entitled "Global population structure and diversity of the red band needle blight pathogen, *Dothistroma septosporum*, reflects anthropogenic activity". Special mention must also be made of Pieter De Maayer, whose talk was nominated as one of the top 5 student presentations at the conference. His talk was entitled "The genome sequence of *Pantoea ananatis*: towards understanding bacterial blight and dieback of *Eucalyptus*".

The congress hosted the annual general meeting of the African Mycological Association at which was well represented by the TPCP/CTHB group and we are proud to announce that Dr Mariëka Gryzenhout, a UP post-doctoral fellow at FABI, was elected as the new chairperson and Prof Jolanda Roux as the secretary of the Association.

The SASPP Congress was enjoyed by all who attended. The days were filled with interesting and thought-provoking ideas and presentations and the dinners and camaraderie in the evening were most welcome. The congress was a great success, giving everyone who participated the chance to air their thoughts and ideas.



***Some members of the TPCP/CTHB who enjoyed the beautiful facilities provided for the congress attendees.***