

THE 48TH CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR PLANT PATHOLOGY

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The South African Society for Plant Pathology held their 48th conference at the scenic ATKV, Klein Kariba resort in Bela-Bela from 20-24 January 2013. This meeting attracted a broad range of people involved in plant pathology, specialising in disease management, pathogen detection and characterisation as well as quarantine regulations. The conference was attended by about 160 members representing regions such as Pretoria, Johannesburg, Potchefstroom, Nelspruit and even as far as Stellenbosch. The three-day program was filled with 65 speakers and 59 poster presenters. The aim of the conference was to bring plant pathologists throughout the country together and promote networking opportunities for researchers with a common interest. This conference provided a broad overview of the challenges faced in industry, the great variety of plant pathogens that threaten crops and trees in our country and what is currently being done to keep this under control.



Klein Kariba venue



Invited speakers and organisers

The four guest speakers that were invited included Drs Rikus Kloppers, Holger Deising, Dave Hodson and Prof Pedro Crous. Dr Klopper from Pannar seed, gave an excellent overview of the current challenges faced by the crop seed industry in breeding for resistance. Dr Holger Deising, from Germany, presented a talk on the importance of functional genomics and the strategies followed for identification of pathogenicity factors involved in plant-pathogen interactions. Dr Dave Hodson (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, ILRI Shola Campus, Ethiopia) discussed the progress that are made in

tracking different strains of rust pathogens in Africa and highlighted the importance of this endeavour. Lastly, Prof Pedro Crous from the CBS (Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures, Netherlands) gave a thought provoking talk on the recent decision to use a single name for fungal species instead of the current teleomorph – anamorph names, the importance of accurate communication on this matter and the challenges involved for researchers in changing to one name for a species.

The conference also provided sufficient opportunities for outdoor activity and socialising. Two field trips were organised, the one focused on the identification of granadilla diseases while the other on potato diseases. In addition to these activities our knowledge on plant pathogens was challenged with a quiz evening that focused on the identification of pathogens based on host symptoms or morphology. The conference ended with a gala dinner on the Wednesday evening during which Prof Mike Wingfield paid tribute to the late Prof Wally Marasas who had a major influence on the field of plant pathology and specifically the SASPP. Awards were presented to the best speakers and poster presenters, which included four FABIANS. The best student presentation was awarded to Darryl Herron; the best molecular-based talk by a student to Anandi Reitmann, the Van der plank Award to Prof Bernard Slippers and Johan van der Linde received the John and Petakin Award.



Quiz evening during the conference



Some of the TPCP/CTHB members that attended the conference