

## THE 6<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL LEGUME CONFERENCE

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The 6<sup>th</sup> International Legume Conference (6 - 11 January 2013), with the theme "Towards a new classification system", was hosted by the Department of Botany and Plant Biotechnology (Faculty of Science) of the University of Johannesburg. The scientific programme included 33 sessions covering varying topics such as Plant-Soil Interactions, Agriculture, Biogeography, Genetics and Genomics and Chemosystematics. During the conference a strong focus was placed on the three current legume subfamilies: Caesalpinioideae, Mimosoideae and Papilionoideae. Attention was given to the genera and informal groups in these subfamilies, which represent taxonomic conundrums, in order to create an updated framework for the classification of these taxa. In total there were five plenary lectures by outstanding legume scientists including Professors Jeff Doyle, Colin Hughes, Matt Lavin, Janet Sprent and Dr Domingos Cardoso. They presented exciting and vital talks on topics such as legume nodulation, legume biogeography, molecular systematics and comparative genomics, species diversification rates and its link to the evolutionary success of legume clades and also a more comprehensive molecular phylogeny of the recently sampled early-branching papilionoid legumes.

The conference was attended by one Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB) core team member, Dr Alex Valentine (Stellenbosch University), and two PhD students - Chrizelle Beukes (University of Pretoria) and Waafeka Vardien. Alex and Waafeka presented their research in a special session on legume physiology that formed part of the theme "Plant-Soil-Interactions". Alex reported his research on the alterations in nitrogen nutrition during phosphorus deficiency in model legumes, whilst Waafeka presented a poster and short talk on the localization of phosphorus, and nitrogen fixation efficiency in *Virgilia divaricata* nodules. Chrizelle Beukes presented a poster entitled "The characterization of bradyrhizobia associated with southern African *Crotalariaeae*".

The conference provided an excellent opportunity not only to meet with scientists focusing on legume research from across the world, but also to establish new contacts for future collaborations.

During the conference the Legume Phylogeny Working Group presented some of their suggestions towards the new Leguminosae classification system. The Working Group comprises leading scientists in legume systematics and taxonomy that earlier came together and formed the group. The group aims at providing a more accurate legume classification system by resolving the current confusing system. This is an open group and invites all researchers that study legumes to participate in this endeavour. The group has been working on a draft proposal for a new Leguminosae classification system which they presented and made available for comments and proposals during the conference. The most recent work on this system as well as the proceedings of this conference will appear in a special edition of the South African Journal of Botany entitled "Advances in Legume Systematics".



From left to right: Chrizelle Beukes, Prof Janet Sprent, Prof Felix Dakora and Dr Julie Ardley.



Professors Jeff Doyle and Janet Sprent both celebrated their birthdays during the conference and had some birthday cake at the Gala Dinner.



Group photo of the delegates who attended the 6<sup>th</sup> International Legume Conference.