

SASPP 2026 Programme

“Ukuqinisekisa Ikusasa Elisimeme Ngempilo Yezitshalo”
“Ensuring a Sustainable Future through Plant Health”

Welcome to the
54th Biennial Congress of the
Southern African Society of Plant Pathology

18 - 21 JANUARY 2026

Umhlanga,
Kwa-Zulu Natal

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Welcome Message
Prof Neil Koorbanally

Dear delegates

On behalf of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our country, South Africa and province of KwaZulu-Natal. Plant Pathology is an essential science in a world grappling with the effects of climate change, new and emerging pathogens, both plant and human, and securing food to sustain the world's population.

It is in conferences such as these that new ideas are born, relationships are forged, collaborations are built, and successes celebrated. Advancing the science of plant pathology, especially with regard to Food Security, Agriculture and the economy, and ensuring environmental health so that our land is able to support its population, is particularly important.

I thank you for stepping up and carrying out cutting edge in this field of research that will enable us to secure the futures of billions of people around the world. It is only through research that we are able to step up to the challenge when a pandemic strikes. If it were not through the remarkable work of scientists that prevailed during the COVID era, the world as we know it, may have been very different today. Carry on the good work, publish impactful and sound science, and know that your work is valued and appreciated.

I wish you all a fruitful, impactful and enjoyable conference.

Prof. Neil Koorbanally
Dean of Research
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Organising Committee

University of KwaZulu-Natal

1. Chairperson: Prof. Augustine Gubba
2. Dr Benice Sivparsad
3. Prof. Kwasi Yobo
4. Dr Nokwazi Mbili



Welcome Address
Prof. Neil Koorbanally



Prof. Koorbanally is an Organic Chemist with over 25 years of experience in the fields of Natural Products and Synthetic Organic Chemistry. He works on the synthesis of hybrid organic molecules for the pharmaceutical industry, with a specific interest in quinolines, benzimidazoles, quinoxalines, pyrimidines, chalcones and coumarins. His current interest is on the design, synthesis, antibacterial, antitubercular and anticancer activity of conjugate molecules, combining two or more organic frameworks or classes of compounds into a single small molecule. In recent years, he has concentrated on quinolines, quinoxalines and benzimidazoles, supervising the synthesis and bioactivity of various libraries of compounds,several of which were seen to have better activity than known drugs. Beside Organic Synthesis, he still enjoys isolating natural products from plant sources and working out their structures. “This is one of the more challenging aspects of Organic Chemistry.” Professor Koorbanally was the 2005 Colenso Scholar at St. John's College at the University of Cambridge and featured amongst the Top 30 most published researchers in 2012, 2015 and 2016 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. To date he has published 180 scientific articles, with over 4200 citations, an H-index Of 34 and i10 index of 113 on Google Scholar, and 30 on Scopus. He graduated 26 Doctoral and 26 Masters students to completion and currently has a group of several Doctoral and Masters students. He is currently the Acting University Dean of Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Keynote Speaker
Prof. Carolee Bull



Prof. Carolee Bull is Professor of Plant Pathology and Systematic Bacteriology and former Head (2015-2022) in the Department of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology at Penn State and was the Inaugural Director of the Penn State Microbiome Center (2016-2022) and currently heads the Microbiome Sciences Dual-Title PhD program. Professor Bull is also an Extraordinary Professor at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Bull's research focuses on translational taxonomy to manage bacterial diseases of plants and mushrooms. Bull served as the convener of the Committee on the Taxonomy of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria for the International Society of Plant Pathology (2006-2022) and continues to serve as a members. She also serves on the Judicial Committee of the International Committee on the Systematics of Prokaryotes. Bull received numerous awards for her mentorship of underrepresented students in agricultural science and visionary leadership including: USDA Secretary's Honor Award, highest award for service to the US in Agriculture, in 2013 the 2022 Inaugural Penn State Microbiome Center Commonwealth Award, and the USDA-NIFA Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) National Extension Diversity Award for Penn State Extension's Latinx Agricultural Network. Bull is a Fellow (2020) and will serve as Vice President

Community Koch's postulates for the study of Mushrooms, Metabolites, and Microbiomes

The cultivation of *Agaricus bisporus* relies on complex microbial interactions within compost and casing layers, yet the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships remain poorly defined. Building on the conceptual framework of Koch's Postulates, we propose extending causality principles to developmental microbiomes ("devomes") that influence fruiting body initiation and crop health. Our research demonstrates strong associations between microbial community composition and key developmental stages, including pinning and primordia formation. Subtractive approaches using antibiotics revealed that casing communities are more sensitive to perturbation than compost communities, with shifts in alpha diversity correlating with changes in yield and disease suppression. Passaging experiments (serial transfer of casing microbiomes) accelerated fruiting body formation and reduced incidence of bacterial blotch caused by *Pseudomonas tolaasii*, though overall yield was not consistently increased. These findings suggest that microbiome manipulation through selective enrichment and passaging can influence developmental phenotypes and disease dynamics, partially satisfying criteria analogous to Community Koch's Postulates. Ongoing work aims to reintroduce isolated taxa and consortia to antibiotic-treated substrates to confirm causality and identify functional drivers. This research highlights the potential of microbiome-based strategies for sustainable mushroom production and provides a model system for testing microbiome causality frameworks in agroecosystems. The presentation will explore the postulates that need to be satisfied for demonstration of a devome in the *Agaricus bisporus* production system.

Keynote Speaker
Prof. Evariste Gueguim Kana

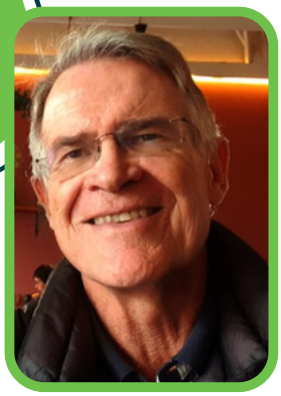


Prof. Gueguim Kana is a distinguished academic at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where he serves as a Professor in the School of Life Sciences and the Academic Leader for Research and Higher Degrees. With over two decades of experience, he has become a leading authority on the application of artificial intelligence in biotechnology and bioengineering. His pioneering research has significantly advanced the field of bioprocess optimization through AI and machine learning, driving innovations that enhance bioprocess efficiency and sustainable production methods. His prolific contributions include over 150 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters, with his landmark study on AI-enhanced biofuel production cited more than 270 times. Prof Kana's exceptional work has been recognized with numerous accolades, including the National Award of Outstanding Contribution in Biotechnology from Nigeria's National University Commission, multiple National Research Foundation grants in South Africa, and the Distinguished Teacher Award from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In 2017, he was honoured as one of the Top 30 Publishing Researchers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His scholarly impact is reflected in his impressive Google Scholar h-index of 48 and over 6,000 citations. Beyond his research, he is deeply committed to mentorship, having graduated numerous MSc and PhD students, thereby shaping the next generation of scientists in AI, biotechnology, and bioengineering.

Generative and Agentic AI for Climate–Pathogen Interaction Modelling: Forecasting the Next Wave of Plant-Disease Threats

Climate volatility is rapidly redrawing the global disease landscape, outpacing traditional surveillance systems. Recent multi-continent analyses reveal that rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and elevated CO_2 levels have already shifted the distribution of major crop pathogens. Meanwhile, lethal fungi like *Aspergillus spp*. could expand their habitat by up to 77% by 2100 under high-emission scenarios. Risk zones are also shifting for diseases such as potato late blight, now threatening regions previously considered safe. Traditional statistical methods struggle to capture the complex, non-linear, and data-sparse dynamics of emerging plant disease patterns. In contrast, generative AI models capable of reasoning over unstructured data such as research papers, field notes, and genomic sequences offer a powerful new lens. When paired with Agentic AI systems that can autonomously use tools, query databases, and, these technologies form a next-generation toolkit. They enable real-time monitoring, and proactive response planning, helping researchers, agronomists, stay ahead of accelerating disease threats in a rapidly changing climate.

Keynote Speaker
Prof. Mark Laing



After growing up in Zimbabwe, he moved to Pietermaritzburg as a student and never left. He lectured in Plant Pathology at the University of Natal and KwaZulu-Natal for 39 years and is now a Professor Emeritus. He calls that a fancy name for “all work, and no pay”. He started the African Centre for Crop Improvement (ACCI) at UKZN, and was its director for 20 years, training PhD students in Plant Breeding on 20 food crops, in 20 countries in Africa. He is a founder and director of three companies in the agricultural field, including Andermatt-PHP, a company that manufactures biocontrol products at factories in the Dargle and Nottingham Road, for global distribution by Andermatt Holdings, Switzerland. He is Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Mowana NPC, a non-profit company that manages 5 villages and 2 care centres for retired people in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, including Woodgrove Retirement Village, where he lives. More work and no pay, he says.

Biologicals for Africa – Current Barriers

Inundative biological control involves using beneficial microbes and insects to control pests, diseases and weeds. It is widely seen as a desirable alternative to the use of pesticides, to the extent that most pesticide companies have acquired a portfolio of biocontrol agents. However, before a biocontrol agent can be sold to farmers or consumers, there is a long and winding road to follow, involving research and discovery, product development and production, formal registration per country, national and international distribution, and concurrent marketing, education and farmer feed-back. These stages may be interactive, and all involve a range of complications which will be identified in the presentation. Ultimately, it is possible but challenging to develop novel biocontrol agents to the point of use by farmers on a global scale.

Keynote Speaker
Prof. Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi



Prof. Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi is a globally recognised researcher, boundary spanner, and science advocate, working on complex water, energy, food and environmental systems at the interface of science, policy, and society. He has a commendable track record of scientific leadership, capacity building, and partnership development crucial for realising the benefits of research, development, and innovation. He aims to spearhead research and development initiatives that influence policy, promote equality, and drive transformation in Africa and globally. He is a Professor of Climate Change, Food Systems, and Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Director of the Institute for Natural Resources (NPC) in South Africa. Previously, he was the Research Group Leader for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems at the International Water Management Institute, and Co-Director and founder of the Centre for Transformative Agricultural and Food Systems of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where he remains an Honorary Professor. He holds strategic roles in various advisory committees and panels and is an editor of several high-impact journals. In addition, he is also the Lead – Water, Energy, Food and Environment (WEFE) Nexus at the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH). Prof. Mabhaudhi is pivotal in establishing the UNU-INWEH African Academy on Water, Environment, and Health. His role involves creating a consortium of stakeholders and a Community of Practice on integrated water, energy, food, and environment (including biodiversity and planetary health) in the global South. In this role, he will contribute to identifying and liaising with potential collaborators/donors and contribute to activities and potential opportunities that bridge the science-policy-practice gap and improve the global visibility and impact of UNU-INWEH, especially through the UNU-INWEH African Academy on Water, Environment and Health.

Linking plant health to water, food and nutrition under climate change: a planetary health perspective

Climate variability and change are perhaps the biggest existential threats facing humankind and the planet. In Africa, a climate hotspot, agri-food systems, which support a large number of livelihoods, will be impacted through disruptions in crop growth and health through increased temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and more intense and frequent weather extremes such as droughts and floods. This will have profound impacts on human and natural systems, requiring systems approaches to achieving resilience and sustainability for both people and the planet under climate change. This talk will provide a planetary health perspective on linking plant health with water, food, and nutrition that recognises the strong interconnections—sometimes described as the climate-food-biodiversity-health nexus – across agricultural, ecological, and human systems. This places emphasis on the interconnectedness and interdependence of plant health, water, food, and human and environmental health as components of resilient agri-food systems. For example, promoting sustainable diets rich in diverse indigenous crops, produced using agroecological approaches that protect biodiversity, could benefit both human and environmental health through reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use, and land use change. To achieve this, we need transdisciplinary research focused on developing synergistic solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

Keynote Speaker
Dr. Jesús Navas-Castillo



Dr. Jesús Navas-Castillo is a Research Professor at the Institute for Subtropical and Mediterranean Horticulture “La Mayora,” a joint institute of CSIC and the University of Málaga, Spain, where he also serves as an Adjunct Professor. He holds a PhD in Plant Virology from the University of Valencia, where he focused on citrus viruses, and has conducted postdoctoral research at INRA (France) and the University of Florida (USA). His current research centers on emerging viral diseases in vegetable crops, particularly whitefly-transmitted begomoviruses and criniviruses, and virus-vector interactions. With over 160 peer-reviewed publications and ongoing collaborations across 31 countries, his work has made substantial contributions tounderstanding plant pathogen biology and improving crop resilience. Dr. Navas-Castillo also serves as an editor for Frontiers in Microbiology, Scientific Reports, and Archives of Virology

From the smallest to the largest: lessons from begomoviruses and criniviruses in Plant Pathology

Plant viruses display extraordinary diversity in genome organization, transmission modes, and epidemiological behavior. Begomoviruses, members of the *Geminiviridae* family, are small single-stranded DNA viruses transmitted persistently by whiteflies. In contrast, criniviruses, belonging to the *Closteroviridae* family, have some of the largest known plant RNA genomes and are transmitted in a semipersistent manner, also by whiteflies. Both groups have emerged as major threats to horticultural crops across tropical and subtropical regions. This presentation will summarize key findings derived from research on these contrasting viral models, focusing on aspects such as genome structure, replication strategies, transmission biology, and disease dynamics. Special emphasis will be placed on crops of high economic relevance, including tomato, pepper, and cucurbits, as well as the often-overlooked role of wild plant species as reservoirs contributing to viral persistence and spread. Studying these viruses —at both extremes of the plant virus genome size spectrum—has provided valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying virus emergence and plant disease management in a changing global context.

Keynote Speaker
Dr. Eugene Rogozhin



Dr. Eugene Rogozhin is a specialist in the study of natural biologically active peptides, mainly antimicrobials. The focus of his main research is on isolation of new peptides from weed plants and microorganisms (bacteria and fungi) of extremophilic habitats. In November of 2013 he was awarded PhD in chemistry, and the title of his thesis is “Structure-functional analysis of novel antimicrobial peptides from barnyard grass seeds”. Currently, he works at Shemyakin and Ovchinnikov Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry, Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and supervises research in the field of establishing molecular mechanisms of antifungal action of natural peptides, mapping the spectrum of antimicrobial proteins secreted by microbial antagonist strains, and also participates in the development of “new generation” biopesticides based on recombinant plant defense proteins and arthropod venom insectotoxins.

Peptide technologies in plant protection: current status and future perspectives

In recent years, an active course towards ecological plant growing has been outlined in global agricultural production, based on which is a significant reduction in the use of chemical pesticides and agrochemicals, up to their complete rejection. In the field of plant protection against diseases, the main emphasis is placed on the use of microbial biopreparations, which include strains of bacteria and fungi with high antagonistic activity, that is capable of synthesizing secreted antimicrobial secondary metabolites. In addition, active development and implementation of drugs in agriculture based on RNA-interference is underway. Peptide technologies in plant protection are a fairly young direction, which consists in the development of systems for the use of biologically active polypeptides with a direct or indirect suppressive effect on phytopathogenic microorganisms and insect pests. Examples of direct action may be contact and systemic action in relation to fungi - facultative parasites and facultative biotrophs, oral action on leaf-eating insects. Indirect action includes induction of activation of plant immunity at the molecular level. Obtaining such molecules is possible by biotechnological tools by creating and using microbial strains-producers, as well as by the method of solid-phase chemical synthesis. Economically, such innovative preparations can be used in the composition of multicomponent biosimilar products for plant protection, including hybrid pesticides.

Keynote Speaker
Dr. Georgios Vidalakis



Dr, Georgios Vidalakis is a globally recognized expert in citrus biosecurity, diagnostics, and the sustainable production of citrus germplasm. As Professor and Cooperative Extension Specialist at the University of California, Riverside, and Director of the Citrus Clonal Protection Program (CCPP), Dr. Vidalakis has played a transformative role in safeguarding citrus through science-based solutions, policy leadership, and collaborative innovation. With a B.S. in Plant Protection from the Agricultural University of Athens, Greece, and a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from UC Riverside, Dr. Vidalakis assumed eadership of the CCPP in 2005. Since then, he has led the program through a major restructuring, expanding it from a modest operation into a world-class center with over 20 team members, a multimillion-dollar annual budget, and a $1 million endowment dedicated to its long-term sustainability. lDr. Vidalakis' research focuses on graft-transmissible pathogens of citrus, including viruses, viroids, and phloem-limited bacteria. Under his leadership, the CCPP has pioneered cutting-edge diagnostics integrating classical bioindexing with advanced molecular and bioinformatics tools such as qPCR, and EDNA.

Ensuring a sustainable future through plant health

California's battle against huanglongbing (HLB) has evolved into an expensive and logistically complex plant disease management program, offering critical lessons for regions preparing for or facing similar threats. Since the HLB Task Force formation in 2006, the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) detection in 2008, and the HLB discovery in 2012, California has established a regulatory framework granting legal authority to the Department of Food and Agriculture's Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Division to implement a comprehensive response across industry, state, and federal agencies with an annual budget of over $47 million. To date, the program has incorporated a high risk-based model, tested hundreds of thousands of citrus trees and ACP samples, eradicated over 10,000 infected residential trees, treated thousands of sites with insecticides, released tens of millions of ACP biocontrol agents, monitored ACP populations using millions of yellow sticky traps and visual inspections, moved nursery and budwood production under protective structures, coordinated areawide ACP treatments and testing of commercial citrus, conducted grower and residential outreach, and scientific evaluations, and established quarantine zones across Southern California to regulate fruit and nursery stock movement. While this coordinated effort has successfully prevented HLB from entering California's $3.6 billion commercial citrus industry, the disease continues to spread in urban landscapes—highlighting the limitations of traditional plant protection strategies in the face of socio-behavioral and infrastructural challenges. This keynote will summarize California's technical, regulatory, and economic responses to HLB, including the challenges of adjusting the program to the evolving dynamics of the HLB–ACP–human systems. Real-time data, emerging scientific insights, and lessons learned from the billion-dollar HLB–ACP research investment in the U.S.A. inform these efforts. The California experience demonstrates that success against HLB depends not only on scientific innovation, but also on preventative measures, cross-sector coordination, sustained funding, and the public's active participation.

Vanderplank Memorial Lecture
Prof. Karen Garrett



Prof. Karen Garrett is a preeminent professor in the Plant Pathology Department, Global Food Systems Institute, and Emerging Pathogens Institute at the University of Florida. Her work addresses epidemiology, ecology, systems analysis, and analyses for decision support, including machine learning approaches. Recent work includes analysis of strengths and vulnerabilities of crop seed systems, adaptation strategies for global change, and corresponding crop breeding networks. Other work addresses the translation of microbiome analyses for improved agricultural management. Garrett is on the editorial committee for Annual Review of Phytopathology, recent Senior Editor for Phytopathology, an elected AAAS Fellow, and is president of the American Phytopathological Society 2024-2025. More information is available at her lab website: garrettlab.com

Scaling epidemiological models in new plant health management ecosystems

One compelling vision for global systems supporting plant health is the proposed global surveillance system for plant disease. A 'global epidemiology system' would be a key component. Epidemiologists can consider the 'core' epidemiological needs of even a small national program, and the most important epidemiological components to add when a program adds new resources and capacity. Core components can be evaluated in terms of the value of information generated and the corresponding cost of information. Identifying core epidemiological tools also supports the development of open-source ecosystems for software and databases, facilitating analyses and developing synergies among research programs. For example, our lab is advancing the R2M Plant Health toolbox (garrettlab.com/r2m) including (a) software to evaluate habitat connectivity as a proxy for epidemic or invasion networks (the geohabnet package in R), (b) tools for expert knowledge elicitation to synthesize expert knowledge (including the MetaQuestion web app), and (c) software to implement scenario analysis for regional management options (the INA package in R). These tools are designed to make the most of currently available information and knowledge, with exciting possibilities for new synergies across applications of artificial intelligence. Realizing these possibilities globally depends on the development of global communities of practice supporting capacity development. Projects like Open Plant Pathology and the Global Plant Health Assessment help to strengthen these communities. New approaches for linked teaching and research, such as global research collaboration workshops (GRCWs), offer other opportunities for strengthening communities that leverage options for online development of global communities and projects.

Ethel Doidge Memorial Address
Dr. Alan Wood



Alan is a Specialist Researcher at the ARC–Plant Health and Protection institute, with 33 years of experience in developing fungal pathogens as biological control agents for the control of alien invasive plants. He has worked on over 20 species of invader plants throughout South Africa and been involved in the release of 6 fungi as agents with another awaiting permission to release. This field work together with holiday trips have enabled him to collect indigenous fungi, particularly rust fungi, from throughout South Africa. From examining the approximately 1000 specimens collected he has discovered new species, new records for South Africa, and solved

The rust fungi of South Africa, a journey through their taxonomy, phylogeny and life histories.

Southern Africa has an indigenous rust (Pucciniales) funga of approximately 630 species, with 460 of these species in South Africa. As a citizen science project, specimens have been collected on an ad hoc basis, and identified, leading to many new discoveries and taxonomic puzzles requiring resolution. Pustules and spores from collected specimens were examined microscopically. In collaboration with Cathie Aime (Purdue University) this funga was sampled and used in phylogenetic analyses. The life histories of this funga are dominated by species with contracted life histories. The majority of species are autoecious with few being heteroecious. Of the autoecious species, many will likely be homothallic. A shortened life history with homothallism, allows for a single basidiospore infection to initiate a local population build up under the prevailing unpredictable climatic conditions. Suggestions are made as to the possible origin of this funga based on the development of the modern South African flora. It is postulated that the rusts of South Africa are of relatively recent origin, consisting of three groups. Firstly, there is an African tropical element with members of the Mikronegerineae (Hemileia), the Sphaerophragmiaceae (Puccorchidium, Sphaerophragmium), and certain Uredinineae (Stomatisora). Their immediate ancestors likely occurred in the tropical forests of Africa during the Paleogene. Secondly, there is a pantropical element including the Raveneliaceae (e.g., Diorchidium, Maravalia, Ravenelia sensu lato, Uropyxis). This likely diversified during the Neogene, when the mimosoids became the dominant trees of the developing savannas. Thirdly, the Pucciniaceae invaded Africa as this continent pushed northwards closing the Tethys Sea. They diversified with the development of the savannas as this become the dominant habitat in most of Africa, and are by far the largest component of the South African rust funga.

Sunday 18 January 2026		
14:00 – 17:00	**Arrival and Registration**	
18:00	**SASPP2026 Welcome Function** sponsored by KwaZulu Natal Convention Bureau Welcome to City of eThekwini – **Honourable Mayor of eThekwini, Cllr Cyril Xaba** UKZN Welcome Address – **Prof. Neil Koorbanally**	
Monday 19 January 2026		
	Registration Desk Hours: 07:15 – 17:00	
	Session 1 **Chairperson: Prof. Teresa Coutinho**	
08:00 – 08:05	Welcome and Announcements – **Prof. Cheryl Lennox**	
08:05 – 08:35	JE Vanderplank Memorial Address – **Prof. Karen Garrett**	
08:35 – 09:05	Keynote Address – **Prof. Mark Laing** Biological Control – Opportunities and Constraints	
09:05 – 09:10	inqaba biotec Presentation – **Pule Shabalala**	
	Disease Management	
09:10 – 09:25	*In vitro* efficacy of phosphonates and novel oomycides to inhibit *Phytophthora nicotianae* from South African citrus nurseries and orchards **Lize Rostoll**	
09:25 – 09:40	Rootstock sensitivity to citrus viroids - Valencia field and glasshouse trials **Chanel Steyn**	
09:40 – 09:55	The use of Bioproducts to control agriculturally significant diseases **Bridgitta Steyn**	
09:55 - 10:10	Development of maize lethal necrosis disease (MLND) resistant maize using CRISPR/Cas9 technology **Augustine Gubba**	
10:10 – 10:40	**Refreshment Break**	
	Session 2 **Chairperson: Prof. Mark Laing**	**Session 3** **Chairperson: Dr. Norman Muzhinji**
	Disease Management	**Disease Management**
10:40 – 10:55	Microbial biocontrol of penicillium-induced citrus fruit decay: screening and characterization of bacterial and yeast antagonistic isolates **Bernice Armelle Bancole**	A LAMP assay to rapidly detect *Ganoderma philippii* in Indonesian *Eucalyptus* plantations. **Alishia Van Heerden**
10:55 – 11:10	Symbiotic bacterial metabolites from entomopathogenic nematodes for biocontrol of *Rhizoctonia solani* and *Botrytis cinerea* **Tshimangadzo Ramakuwela**	Evaluating the efficacy of biocontrol agents against *phytophthora cinnamomi* **Kayleigh Carter**
11:10 – 11:25	Evaluation of alternative spray programs for the control of pre- and post- harvest diseases on avocado **Zilungisele Ramoshaba**	Incidence of heart rot in pomegranates under alternative treatments in conjunction with registered Azoxystrobin **Elizabeth van Rooyen**

Monday 19 January 2026		
	Session 2 **Chairperson: Prof. Mark Laing**	**Session 3** **Chairperson: Dr. Norman Muzhinji**
	Disease Management	**Disease Management**
11:25 – 11:40	Evaluation of optimum detection times for avocado sunblotch viroid (ASBVd) during phenological growth stages of avocado **Lebogang Motaung**	Impact of crop rotation and cover crops on soil health in a dryland cropping system in the Eastern Free State, South Africa **Taryn Armfield**
11:40 – 11:55	Translating international standards for phytosanitary measures into practice: strengthening disease management in plant health systems **Elma Carstens**	The potential of plant extracts as biostimulants and biofungicides on potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) **Jessica Pracher**
11:55 – 12:10	Assessing the efficacy of the Alter-Rater risk model in managing Alternaria brown spot of citrus in South Africa **Cerista de Muelenaere**	Winter cover crop phenology-dependent allelopathic effects against *Phytophthora nicotianae* in a citrus glasshouse study **Tuelo Motloba**
12:10 – 12:25	Fungicide sensitivity of *Botrytis cinerea* isolates from South African lemon orchards **Nhlonipho Ngubane**	Ultrastructural examination of the fungus-to-fungus interactions of *Lecanicillium uredinophilum* and *Phakopsora pachyrhizi*. **Phumelela Mwelasi**
12:25 – 13:35	**Lunch**	
	Session 4 **Chairperson: Dr. Khumbuzile Bophela-Dimpe**	
13:35 – 14:05	Keynote Address - **Prof. Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi** Linking plant health to water, food and nutrition under climate change: a planetary health perspective.	
14:05 – 14:35	Keynote Address - **Prof. Gueguim Kana** Climate-pathogen interactions - Generative & Agentic AI for Climate–Pathogen Interaction Modelling: Forecasting the Next Wave of Plant-Disease Threats	
	Disease Management	
14:35 – 14:50	Uncovering new *Ficus* hosts for *Phakopsora nishidana* **Botma Visser**	
14:50 – 15:05	A decade of pecan disease research in South Africa **Gert Marais**	
15:05 – 15:20	Progress towards testing and identifying pesticides for sustainable management of nursery and plantation pests and pathogens **Mesfin Gossa**	
15:20 – 15:50	**Refreshment Break**	

Monday 19 January 2026		
	Session 5 **Chairperson: Dr. Julia Meitz-Hopkins**	**Session 6** **Chairperson: Dr. Tendekai Mahlanza**
	Disease Management	**Disease Management**
15:50 – 16:05	Effect of foliar fungicides on Fusarium head blight and mycotoxin contamination of wheat **Amanda Magwaza**	The potential of Anaerobic Soil Disinfestation for managing Apple Replant Disease in South Africa **Michael du Toit**
16:05 – 16:20	Characterisation and management of *Leptosphaeria maculans* causing blackleg of canola in the Western Cape province of South Africa **Huibrecht Schreuder**	Phylogenetic analysis of South African isolates of *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. *tritici* and *P. graminis* f. sp. *tritici* **Isabella du Toit**
16:20 – 16:35	Establishing the *in vitro* sensitivity of currently used oomycides and determining baseline sensitivity to new proposed oomycides to manage Phytophthora on macadamia in South Africa **Martin-John Richard**	Utilising plant health-promoting *Bacillus* strains from cactus pear to mitigate drought stress and *Fusarium* induced damping off and root rot in wheat **Habofanoe Fosa**
16:35 – 16:50	Assessment of the level of tree dieback in mature apple orchards through remote sensing techniques **Elsefie Fouché**	Fungicide sensitivity of *Alternaria* species causing Alternaria brown spot and core rot of citrus in South Africa **Vernon Jacobs**
16:50 – 17:05	Biocontrol of citrus soilborne diseases: a multifactor analysis of growth promotion and defence gene expression. **Stefni van der Walt**	Fungicide sensitivity and characterisation of mutations associated with reduced QoI and SDHI sensitivity of grapevine powdery mildew **Danae Stoltz**
17:05 – 17:20	Evaluating UV-C light as a control measure for *Phytophthora* brown rot of citrus and elucidating the defence response **Jacobus Johannes Hamersma**	Investigating the efficacy of biocontrol agents in combination with fungicides as pruning wound protectants on grapevine rootstock mother blocks **Zubayr Daniels**
17:20 – 17:35	Rooted in protection - Deciphering *Trichoderma's* arsenal against *Dematophora necatrix* destruction **Raven Wienk**	
18:00 till late	**SASPP 2026 Group Photo** **Starke Ayres Quiz Night with Burgers and Bunny Chows**	

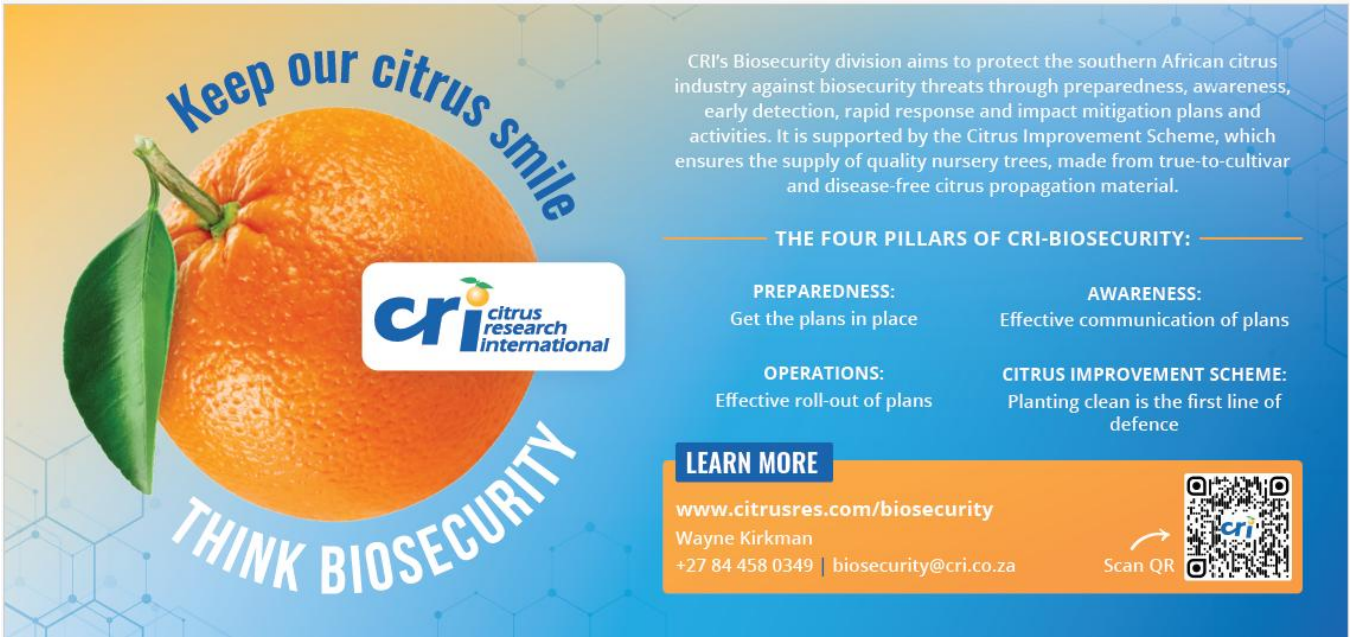
Tuesday 20 January 2026		
	Registration Desk Hours: 07:30 – 17:00	
	Session 7 **Chairperson: Dr. Jolanda Roux**	
08:00 – 08:30	Ethyl M. Doidge Memorial Address – **Dr. Alan Wood**	
08:30 – 09:00	Keynote Address - **Dr. Eugene Rogozhin** Peptide technologies in plant protection: current status and future perspectives	
09:00 – 09:30	Keynote Address - **Prof. Carolee Bull** Mushrooms, Metabolites, and Microbiomes	
09:30 – 10:00	Keynote Address - **Dr. Jesús Navas-Castillo** From the smallest to the largest: Lessons from Begomoviruses and Criniviruses in plant pathology	
10:00 – 10:10	SACNASP Presentation – **Lientjie Mogano**	
10:10 – 10:40	**Refreshment Break**	
	Session 8 **Chairperson: Dr. Lindy Esterhuizen**	**Session 9** **Chairperson: Dr. Lindy Rose**
10:45 – 12:45	**Plant-Pathogen Insect Interactions**	**Postharvest disease management and mycotoxins**
10:45 – 11:00	Unravelling the endophytic maize grain mycobiome of grey leaf spot diseased plants: Assessing the seed-borne potential of *Cercospora Zeina* **Nkosinathi Sthembiso Ndaba**	The *Fusarium* Mycotoxin Cocktail: Diversity and Contamination in Maize from Eastern Cape **Neriman Yilmaz**
11:00 – 11:15	Insights from the shared infection strategies of plant- and insect- pathogenic fungi **Andi Wilson**	Occurrence and genetic diversity of *Stenocarpella maydis* and associated Diplodiatoxin in maize grain from commercial and smallholder fields across multiple seasons in South Africa **Belinda Janse van Rensburg**
11:15 – 11:30	Functional insights into plant immune modulation by the *Phytophthora parasitica* effector PpRxLR55 **Celiwe Nxumalo**	Integrative Analysis of Genetic and Metabolic Resistance Mechanisms to Fusarium and Gibberella Ear Rot of Maize **Ayesha Shaikh**
11:30 – 11:45	From sequence to symptom — linking small RNAs to leaf bleaching in avocado sunblotch disease **Melissa Joubert**	Cross-pathogenicity of species within the *Fusarium graminearum* species complex obtained from different field crops produced in South Africa **Kirsty Potgieter**
11:45 – 12:00	Functional characterization of *Phytophthora parasitica var. nicotianae* PpRxLR4 effector protein **Allen Arineitwe**	Assessing grain mould prevalence and farmer awareness in South African sorghum production systems **Thabiso Masisi**
12:00 – 12:15	Transmission studies to determine the susceptibility of alternative host plants in the transmission of banana bunchy top virus in SA **Sinethemba Ximba**	Mapping maize ear rots and their toxins in South Africa **Mandisa Promise Shabalala**

Tuesday 20 January 2026		
	Session 8 **Chairperson: Dr. Lindy Esterhuizen**	**Session 9** **Chairperson: Dr. Lindy Rose**
	Plant-Pathogen Insect Interactions	**Postharvest disease management and mycotoxins**
12:15 – 12:30	Identification and characterisation of a putative virulence effector from *Puccinia graminis* f. sp. *tritici* **Jaki du Plooy**	Seasonal occurrence of *Pseudopithomyces toxicarius* in South African Dairy pastures **Jenna-Lee Price**
12:30 – 12:45	Transcriptomic analysis of *Cercospora zeina* effectors reveals the expression of necrosis-inducing secreted protein 1 (NIS1) homologs during the mid stage of maize infection. **Trystan Nadasen**	
12:45 – 14:00	**Lunch**	
	Session 10 **Chairperson: Prof. Irene Barnes**	**Session 11** **Chairperson: Dr. Lisa Rothmann**
	Pathogen identification and characterization	**Ecology and Epidemiology**
14:00 – 14:15	*Ganoderma* species associated with *Acacia crassicarpa* planted in lowland areas of Sumatra, Indonesia **Ariska van der Nest**	Shifts in the potato soil microbiome under changing temperature and CO_2 levels **Angelique de Wet**
14:15 – 14:30	Revisiting the taxonomy of *Sclerotinia*: Phylogenetic and phylogenomic insights into a fungal plant pathogen **Chanel Thomas**	Sources of *Phytophthora nicotianae* in citrus nurseries **Jacquie van der Waals**
14:30 – 14:45	*Penicillium* diversity across soils of the Western Cape **Nicole van Vuuren**	Airing out the risks: Airborne Fungal Spore Fluctuations in South African Blueberry Packhouses **Rocky Kleintjes**
14:45 – 15:00	The hidden sex lives of beetle-associated *Ambrosiella* species **Frances Lane**	Involvement of non-crop Poaceae species in the maintenance of the *P. alienus* leafhopper and the Wheat dwarf virus **Emmanuel Jacquot**
15:00 – 15:15	From reads to results: evaluating sequencing platforms for citrus virus surveillance **Rachelle Bester**	Stressed out: how environmental challenges shape gene expression in *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* **Janet Roberts**
15:15 – 15:30	Comparing citrus RNA extraction methods to boost virus and viroid detection accuracy **Madelein Dippenaar**	Machine learning-based prediction of leaf wetness duration: A framework for evaluating biocontrol deployment feasibility in soybean fields **Phumelela Mwelasi**

Tuesday 20 January 2026		
	Session 10 **Chairperson: Prof. Irene Barnes**	**Session 11** **Chairperson: Dr. Lisa Rothmann**
	Pathogen identification and characterization	**Ecology and Epidemiology**
15:30 – 15:45	*Puccinia graminins* f. sp. *tritici* remains an evolving threat to wheat production in South Africa **Tarekegn Terefe**	Diversity and distribution of pepper ringspot virus associated with *Helianthus annuus* L. in South Africa **Vida Burger**
15:45 – 16:15	**Refreshment Break**	
	Session 12 **Chairperson: Dr. Benice Sivparsad**	
16:15 – 18:00	**Poster Speed Talks:** Posters 1 - 33	
18:00 – 18:45	**Biennial General Meeting**	
18:45 till late	**Braai and Mildenhall Stakes**	



Wednesday 21 January 2026	
	Registration Desk Hours: 07:30 – 17:00
	Session 13 **Chairperson: Prof. Paul Fourie**
	Biosecurity – from paper plans to real-life challenges
08:00 -08:05	Introduction to session - **Paul Fourie**
08:05 – 08:30	Keynote Address – California's fight against HLB, expensive lessons - **Georgios Vidalakis**
08:30 – 08:45	The South African Emergency Plant Pest Response Plan: a strategic and plant biosecurity approach to early detection and apid response **Jan-Hendrik Venter**
08:45 – 09:00	Tackling HLB threat to citrus in Southern Africa **Paul Fourie**
09:00 – 09:15	Forest biosecurity in Southern Africa - challenges and opportunities **Jolanda Roux**
09:15 – 09:30	Banana bunchy top virus outbreak and control **Anna Jooste**
09:30 – 09:45	Combating a globally important biosecurity threat: the Fusarium wilt Tropical Race 4 case study **Diane Mostert**
09:45 – 10:00	The Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer invasion in South Africa: where are we now? **Francois Roets**
10:00 – 10:15	Goss's Wilt in Maize — We didn't see it coming **Rikus Klopper**
10:15-10:45	**Refreshment Break**



Wednesday 21 January 2026		
	Session 14 **Chairperson: Prof. Hano Maree**	
	Biosecurity	
10:45 – 11:00	Towards a centralised and accessible disease surveillance system for grain crops in South Africa **Lisa Rothmann**	
11:00 – 11:45	Ten years of plant health research in South African botanical gardens: the SANBI-FABI sentinel project **Felipe Balocchi**	
11:45 – 12:00	The biosecurity surveillance trapping network in southern Africa and citrus Liberibacter detection **Muriel Rikhotso**	
12:00– 12:15	Safeguarding the soybean export market: A national surveillance approach to sudden death syndrome in South Africa **Thabo Phasoana**	
12:15 – 12.30	Complexity of Citrus Liberibacter diagnostics and psylloid vector surveillance in Africa **Glynnis Cook**	
12:30 -13:45	**Lunch**	
	Session 15 **Chairperson: Prof. Gerda Fourie**	**Session 16** **Chairperson: Prof. Willem Boshoff**
	Pathogen identification and characterization	**Ecology and Epidemiology**
13:45 – 14:00	Branch invaders: Investigating the *Botryosphaeriaceae* in South African avocados **Heike Beukes**	Epidemiology of dry flower disease on macadamia in South Africa **Sanelisiwe Duma**
14:00 – 14:15	A combined recombinase polymerase amplification CRISPR/Cas12a assay for detection of *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* tropical race 4 **Jos Jansen van Vuuren**	Fungal Déjà Vu: Two decades of *Immersiporthe knoxdaviesiana* (Cryphonectriaceae) canker epidemics driven by clonal pathogen lineages **Nam Pham**
14:15 – 14:30	Identification and characterisation of *Alternaria* spp. and *Cladosporium* spp. causing postharvest decay in late mandarin fruit during cold storage periods in USA markets **Savannah McIntyre**	Genomic diversity of banana wilt associated phytoplasmas in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands **Mignon de Jager**
14:30 – 14:45	A surprisingly diverse assemblage of *Botryosphaeriaceae* associated with blue stain of *Pinus* in Mpumalanga, South Africa **Christiaan Grobler**	Whole genome sequence data applied for the first time to interrogate the genetic diversity and population structure of *Chrysoporthe austroafricana* **Callin Ceriani**
14:45 – 15:00	Species boundaries and genetic diversity revealed in archival South African clinical *Sporothrix* strains **Taygen Fuchs**	Patterns of local Ganoderma root rot spread in *Eucalyptus* plantations in Sumatra **Ariska van der Nest**

Wednesday 21 January 2026		
	Session 15 **Chairperson: Prof. Gerda Fourie**	**Session 16** **Chairperson: Prof. Willem Boshoff**
	Pathogen identification and characterization	**Ecology and Epidemiology**
15:00 – 15:15	Pseudocercospora fruit spot and rot: An important disease on kiwifruit (*Actinidia chinensis*) in South Africa **Cheyenne Theron**	Critical fruit protection period against citrus black spot infection in South Africa **Providence Moyo**
15:15 – 15:30	Unidirectional Mating-Type Switching in *Ceratocystis*: A Unique Sexual Strategy Shaping Pathogen Adaptation **Sam Eichhorn**	
15:30 -15:45	**Refreshment Break**	
18:30 for 19:00	**Gala Dinner** SASPP 2026 Congress Closing Remarks – **Prof. Teresa Coutinho**	

Thursday, 22 January 2026: Departures



No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Biosecurity			
BST_1	David	Read	Plant Biosecurity: Considerations when dealing with quarantine pests – A Goss' Wilt case study
BST_2	Zama	Theledi	Post Entry Quarantine (PEQ) of citrus
BST_3	Vinolia	Danki	Preserve, Identify, Protect: The Role of the National Collection of Fungi in Plant Pathology and Biosecurity
BST_4	Yolanda	Petersen	Optimisation of a viability PCR protocol for the detection of *Xylophilus ampelinus* in grapevine
Disease Management			
DM_1	Archana	Nunkumar	Evaluation of fungicide application and Potato (*Solanum tuberosum L*) cultivars against Late Blight (*Phytophthora infestans* (Mont.) de Bary)
DM_2	Tebogo	Marutha	Postharvest management of wet core rot infections in apple
DM_3	Julius	Kgosiemang	Testing entomophagous fungi against *Diptera* and *Lepidopteran* pests
DM_4	Reneilwe	Mohale	Survey of potato late blight in South Africa to recap on mating types and assess fungicide sensitivity of *Phytophthora infestans* isolates
DM_5	Loren	Trerise	Investigating the antifungal mechanisms of gallic acid against *Fusarium* wilt disease
DM_6	Tammy	Wallace	Controlling *Fusarium oxysporum*: Mechanistic Investigation of Caffeic Acid Against Crown and Root Rot
DM_7	René	Sutherland	Survival of the bacterial wilt pathogen
DM_8	Sherly	Mabena	Analysis of seed surface disinfection techniques for the detection of seed-borne bacterial pathogens in underutilized crops
DM_9	Anza	Muthabi	The antagonistic effect of plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria against soil-borne pathogens of potato
DM_10	Lethabo	Matlou	The study of plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) in South Africa and their effects on potato plants
DM_11	Lesedi	Chepape	Isolation and characterisation of plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) from *Cannabis sativa*
DM_12	Megan	Farquhar	Essential oils against pear postharvest pathogen, *Diplodia seriata*, tested in vitro and in vivo
DM_13	Julia	Mulabisana	Confirmation of virus seed transmission and the effects on wet and dry weight of Swiss chard and mustard spinach
DM_14	Tholoana	Mofurutsi	Host-Plant Mediated Selection of Beneficial Microbes in the Presence of Plant Resistance Inducers
DM_15	Damon	Rose	Infection and protection of maize silks against mycotoxigenic fungi with fungicides
DM_16	Caitlyn	English	Sensitivity determination and assessment of Exserohilum turcicum to the succinate dehydrogenase inhibitor (SDHI) fungicide pydiflumetofen

***2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Disease Management			
DM_17	Carla	Kistan	Understanding orange rust (Puccinia Kuehnii) in South Africa: early observations and research priorities
DM_18	Otlotleng	Moloto	The development of translation initiation factor-based resistance to sweet potato virus disease using crispr/cas9 technology
DM_19	Sharon	McFarlane	The South African Sugarcane Research Institute: 100 years of Pathology Research
DM_20	Ntebogeng	Choma	Antifungal efficacy of Moringa oleifera leaf extracts against Alternaria alternata
DM_21	Francinah	Ratsoma	Extracellular vesicles modulate growth and stress adaptation in *Fusarium circinatum*
DM_22	Martin	Richard	Evaluating the efficacy of new experimental actives against *Phytophthora* root rot and stem canker on macadamia
DM_23	Charles	Stevens	Evaluation of essential oils for the control of *Phytophthora* brown rot of citrus
DM_24	Simone	Cronje	The impact of different fungicide spray programmes on wheat foliar pathogen diseases
DM_25	Viwe	Mbulawa	Screening of endophytic bacteria isolated from apple rootstocks for their potential as biological control agents against crown gall disease of apple
DM_26	Mariette	Truter	The Centre of Excellence in Plant Health at the Agricultural Research Council
DM_27	Nonkululeko	Poswa	Exploring the link between wattle rust (*Uromycladium acaciae*) and wattle mirid (*Lygidolon leavigatum*): insect-disease complex affecting black wattle plantations
DM_28	Mpho	Matsetela	Screening of fungicide actives and biological control agents against husk rot disease pathogens in macadamia
DM_29	Ipeleng	Pooa	Towards gene editing for resistance against the banana bunchy top virus (BBTV)
DM_30	Inge	Block	Postharvest decay control using alternative products for cherry fruit
DM_31	Bianca	Hough-Mahmood	Exploring mycoviral diversity and curing strategies in plant pathogenic *Ceratocystis* species
DM_32	Thabiso	Masisi	Field-based disease phenotyping of sorghum genotypes in three contrasting South African environments
DM_33	Gert	Marais	Evaluation of fungicides against the most prominent fungal pathogens of pecan diseases in South Africa
DM_34	Firehiwot	Eshetu	Sensitivity of *Pseudocercospora spp*., the causal agents of kiwifruit spot and rot, to fungicides from different chemical groups
DM_35	Khumbuzile	Bophela-Dimpe	Identification and functional characterisation of antimicrobial activity of fungal endophytes against *Exserohilum turcicum*

***2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Ecology and Epidemiology			
EE_1	Jarrod	Kisling	Pepper ringspot virus (PepRSV) in South Africa – How widespread does this nematode-transmitted tobravirus occur in potato production regions of South Africa?
EE_2	Mariechen	van Baalen	Infection of Eureka lemon blossoms by Botrytis cinerea and validation of the *PhytRisk Botrytis* infection model.
EE_3	Sandra	Lamprecht	*Macrophomina phaseolina* associated with cotton seedlings in South Africa
EE_4	Sandra	Lamprecht	*Diaporthe* species associated with sudden death of rooibos in plantations
EE_5	Huibrecht	Schreuder	Incidence and distribution of *Sclerotium rolfsii* affecting dry bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) in South Africa
EE_6	Mariana	van Deventer	Real-time monitoring of *Sclerotinia stem* rot development on canola using a novel, low-cost spore sampler and qPCR
EE_7	Vida	Burger	Transmission routes of pepper ringspot virus associated with *Helianthus annuus L.* (sunflower) in South Africa
EE_8	Taygen	Fuchs	Fungal diversity in South African gold mines: A hidden reservoir of novel taxa
EE_9	Vernon	Jacobs	The effect of shade netting on the prevalence of *Alternaria* brown spot and core rot diseases of citrus in South Africa
EE_10	Lindy	Esterhuizen	Host range determination of Pepper ringspot virus (PepRSV), the latest threat to the South African potato industry.
EE_11	David	Read	Insights into Turnip yellows virus populations, infecting *Brassica napus L.* (canola) in the Western Cape, South Africa
EE_12	Lungelo	Dlamini	*Ganoderma lucidum* production and nutritional content analysis using readily available raw materials in KwaZulu-Natal
Pathogen Identification, Characterisation and Taxonomy			
PCT_1	Chanel	Thomas	Starships in *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*: first evidence of actively-transposing transposable elements with potential impacts on pathogenicity
PCT_2	Frances	Lane	Sex in fungal pathogens – how weird can it get?
PCT_3	Zintle	Xhegwana	The diversity and distribution of *Pythium* and *Phytophthora* species in South African soils
PCT_4	Sina	Sinathe	Identification and characterization of *Cannabis sativa* viruses and viroids in South Africa
PCT_5	Casey	Gill	Room-temperature dried leaf storage preserves citrus samples for reliable detection of *Candidatus Liberibacter spp.*
PCT_6	Shannon	Goodchild	Evaluation of the spatial and temporal distribution of '*Candidatus Liberibacter africanus*' in citrus host plants
PCT_7	Felipe	Balocchi Schalchli	Diversity of *Rugonectria* species from alien and indigenous hosts in South African botanical gardens
PCT_8	Felipe	Balocchi Schalchli	*Phytophthora* diseases on indigenous hosts in South African botanical gardens

***2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Pathogen Identification, Characterisation and Taxonomy			
PCT_9	Jennifer	Gomes de Freitas	Identification and characterisation of the mating-type locus from the genome sequences of diverse *Sclerotinia* species
PCT_10	Adam	Bazerbachi	Characterisation of the mating-type locus in *Diplodia* species
PCT_11	Elsie	Cruywagen	A survey of fungal pathogens affecting cannabis in South Africa
PCT_12	Mukondeleli	Khethani	Characterisation of B*ipolaris*, C*urvularia* and S*eptoria* species associated with leaf spots on *cannabis*
PCT_13	Fahimeh	Jami	*Phytophthora palmivora*: A serious threat to papaya production in South Africa
PCT_14	Simone	Bornman	A first look at the mycovirome of South African *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* isolates
PCT_15	Fahimeh	Jami	First report of c*annabis* diseases in South Africa
PCT_16	Thobeka	Mzimela	Molecular identification of *Erysiphe* species causing powdery mildew from vegetable crops in South Africa
PCT_17	Midana	Marageni	Detection of Sweet potato chlorotic stunt virus and its relationship with potyviruses: the South African experience over the past 10 years
PCT_18	Benedicta	Swalarsk-Parry	Identification and characterization of *Fusarium* species from diseased cannabis buds, stems and roots.
PCT_19	Wilma	Nel	A new ambrosia beetle species infesting *Combretum erythrophyllum* in South Africa
PCT_20	Marisca	Hough	Sexual reproduction potential of *Cladosporium cladosporioides*, the causative agent of pecan scab in South Africa
PCT_21	Gary	Creamer	Fungal diversity in dairy cow forage production systems with special emphasis on mycotoxigenic fungi
PCT_22	Mulanga	Munzhelele	Identification of seed-borne fungi in underutilized crops: Bambara groundnut, Amaranth and Kenaf
PCT_23	Brightness	Nkosi	*Fusarium* populations causing dry and stem-end rot of potato in the Free State
PCT_24	Tumisang	Mokgobu	Identification of *Nanidorus* minor as the vector of Pepper Ringspot Virus (PepRSV) in South Africa.
PCT_25	Nam	Pham	A novel *Eucalyptus*-associated *Cryphonectria* (*Cryphonectriaceae, Diaporthales*) species from North Sumatra, Indonesia
PCT_26	Shalya	Moodley	Exploring South African oilseed diseases through molecular identification of fungi associated with sunflower and soybean
PCT_27	Sibongile	Jiyane	Taking a look at Tospovirus diversity in *Solanum* crops in South Africa.
PCT_28	Lerato	Dhlamini	The who's who of the South African *Capsicum virome*

***2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Pathogen Identification, Characterisation and Taxonomy			
PCT_29	Bianke	Marx	Reconsidering cellulose in the cell walls of the *Ophiostomatales*
PCT_30	Pieter	van der Walt	Survey of citrus scab in different citrus production regions of South Africa
PCT_31	Ayanda	Msweli	Identification and characterization of viruses associated with *Passiflora edulis* in South Africa
PCT_32	Nosihle	Sithole	Identification and characterization of viruses infecting cowpea and Bambara groundnut in South Africa.
PCT_33	Cheyenne	Theron	A new leaf spot disease of kiwifruit caused by a species of *Sclerotiniaceae*
PCT_34	Estie	Coetzee	Fungi associated with overall decline in pecan orchards in the Northern Cape, South Africa.
PCT_35	Zimbili	Mthethwa	Identification of viruses infecting potato (*Solanum tuberosum L.*) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN): a focus on Potato virus Y(PVY)
PCT_36	Gert	Marais	Description and pathogenicity of the *Cladosporium cladosporioides* species complex causing pecan scab in South Africa
PCT_37	Matthew	Webber	Three new grapevine trunk disease (GTD) pathogens discovered in Northern Cape vineyards
PCT_38	Simiso	Langa	Peeling Back the Layers: the isolation and characterisation of the pathogens responsible for onion bulb disease in The Gambia
PCT_39	Thando	Bhiya	Characterization of *Alternaria* leaf blight diseases associated with prominent vegetable crops in South Africa
PCT_40	Tjitjila	Makhura	Incidence and characterization of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* and *Sclerotium* rolfsii in South African dry bean fields
PCT_41	Oriah	Maffa	The distribution, diversity and virulence of *Clavibacter nebraskensis* causing Goss's bacterial wilt and leaf blight in South Africa
PCT_42	Wendy	Langehoven	Grapevine crown gall in table grape mother blocks in South Africa
PCT_43	Athinkosi	Nogemane	Assessing cultivar reactions to *Alternaria spp.* in Sunflower grain: a multi-season study across South African production regions
PCT_44	Norman	Muzhinji	Genome assembly and comparative analysis of *Alternaria linariae* reveal Putative Novel Genes associated with host colonization and virulence
PCT_45	Alishia	Van Heerden	Microsatellite markers developed to monitor populations of the root-rot pathogen *Ganoderma philippii*
PCT_46	Chris	Spies	Characterisation of oomycetes in olive nurseries in the Western Cape
PCT_47	Chris	Spies	*Phytophthora cinnamomi* and other oomycetes in blueberry nurseries in the Western Cape

***2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Plant-Pathogen/Insect Interaction			
PPI_1	Lindokuhle	Masimula	The feasibility of High-Throughput sequencing for subsistence farmers in resource-constrained environments
PPI_2	Paul	Lombard	Early detection of Valley Bushveld Decline in citrus orchards using visible-near infrared spectroscopy
PPI_3	Marizanne	Jones-Meyer	Efficacy of baculoviruses against *Plutella xylostella* (Diamondback Moth) in larval bioassays
PPI_4	David	Nsibo	Hierarchical population structure and micro-spatial genetic diversity of *Exserohilum turcicum*
PPI_5	Thabiso	Motaung	Membrane vesicles shape the battle between Pines and *Fusarium*
PPI_6	Olona	Mnguni	Evaluating the efficacy of the crispr/cas9 t-dna vectors for mutating viral susceptibility genes in *nicotiana benthamiana* and banana protoplasts
PPI_7	Busi	Cele	Proteomic analysis of Banana bunchy top virus and *Musa acuminata* protein-protein interactions for development of virus-resistant banana
PPI_8	Theresa	Bapela	Screening of maize (*Zea mays L.*) cultivars for sources of charcoal rot (*M. phaseolina*) resistance
PPI_9	Catherina	Kuetezang	In silico prediction and characterisation of secondary metabolites in *Exserohilum* species associated with maize
PPI_10	Nam	Pham	Cryptic Sporothrix species associated with native pine bark beetles in Florida, USA
PPI_11	Alida	van Dijk	Comparison of pathogenicity of *Fusarium circinatum* on seedlings and branches of Pinus patula
PPI_12	Aaron	Harvey	Callose synthases fortifying avocado defence against *Phytophthora cinnamomi*
PPI_13	Lindokuhle	Biyela	Extracellular vesicles in soft rot pathogens: production, cargo, and clues to virulence
PPI_14	Mihlali	Badiwe	Screening of citrus rootstock seedlings for tolerance to combined bicarbonate salt and *Neocosmospora solani*
PPI_15	Nkosingiphile	Zulu	Evaluating the efficacy of *Maerua angolensis* and *Tabernaemontana elegans* application in population dynamics of *Meloidogyne spp.*, and their effects on the performance and growth of tomato plants under greenhouse conditions
PPI_16	Fanele	Mnguni	Identification of potential pathogenic traits exhibited by *Rahnella spp.* as opportunistic pathogens of onion bulbs using comparative genomic analyses
PPI_17	Preston	Shaw	Long-read RNA sequencing reveals extensive alternative splicing repertoires in fungal plant pathogens
PPI_18	Trevor	Koopman	Proteomic analysis of the plant-pathogen interaction between the B45 (resistant) and 'Royal Gala' (susceptible) apple cultivars

***2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated**

No.	First Name	Last Name	Abstract Title
Post-harvest Pathology and Mycotoxins			
PPM_1	Keabetswe	Baloyi	Evaluating the impact of environment, maize cultivar, and *Stenocarpella maydis* isolate diversity on Diplodiatoxin production in maize grain
PPM_2	Bongani	Mahlangu	Characterising the Aspergillus species diversity associated with groundnuts produced in South Africa: working towards developing a biocontrol product
PPM_3	Alana	den Breeyen	Influence of storage conditions and packaging in decay control and quality maintenance of table grapes during extended storage



*2-Minute Poster Speed Talk Indicated

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