ISPP INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PLANT PATHOLOGY

PROMOTING WORLD-WIDE PLANT HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PLANT PATHOLOGY

ISPP NEWSLETTER

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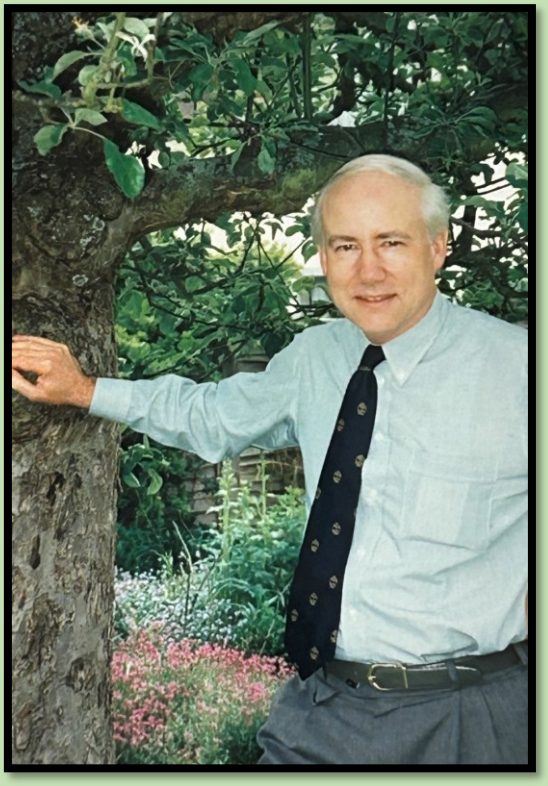
IN THIS ISSUE:

OBITUARY OF DR PETER RICHARD SCOTT FISPP, 1942-2025

DR GREG JOHNSON, PROF LODOVICA GULLINO, PROF RICHARD FALLOON; PAST PRESIDENTS, INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PLANT PATHOLOGY



Peter Scott in his garden 1996 (photo by Richard Scott)

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Dr Peter R Scott, in Oxford, United Kingdom, on 7 January 2025 after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease. Dr Scott was a Past President and Fellow of the International Society for Plant Pathology (ISPP).

Peter Scott was a stalwart friend of science, and advocate for expanding and enhancing access to knowledge. His career highlights include innovative and productive research on cereal diseases, development and promotion of the CABI *Crop Protection Compendium*, distinguished service to the British Society for Plant Pathology and to the ISPP, as well as championing international initiatives relating to global food security.

Dr Scott was born in Oxford on March 12, 1942. After schooling in Winchester, he attended the University of Cambridge, graduating PhD from the Botany School in 1967, and began his research career at the Plant Breeding Institute, Cambridge as a Project Leader in the Pathology Department. He progressed to appointment as Principal Scientific Officer in 1976, undertaking and leading research on facultative fungal pathogens of cereals, particularly in the context of breeding for disease resistance. His close colleagues were Dr Martin Wolfe and Dr Roy Johnson. He also spent a period of research in New Zealand in 1983-84, as a visiting researcher working on cereal diseases. His personal and collaborative research was published in more than 60 papers.

In 1987 Dr Scott joined CAB International (CABI), at Wallingford, United Kingdom, where he became Head of the Division of Plant Sciences and Natural Resources and Director of the CABI Information Institute (in 1996) and Director of Programme Development (in 1998). He led the international project to develop the *Crop Protection Compendium*, and then the *Compendium* series on forestry, animal health, aquaculture, and invasive species. After retiring from CABI in 2004, he continued in consultancies to that and other organisations.

Dr Scott's professional activities in plant pathology included service in the British and international arenas. He was a founder member of the British Society for Plant Pathology (BSPP), and was elected Vice President of the BSPP in 1994, President Elect in 1995, and President in 1996. He was Deputy Editor and Senior Editor of the journal *Plant Pathology* from 1981-88. For the International Congress of Plant Pathology in Edinburgh in 1998 (ICPP1998), he was Chairman of the Bid Committee, then Chairman of the Organizing Committee. During 2000 he was awarded the British Crop Protection Council Medal for Outstanding Service to British Crop Protection and was elected an Honorary Member of the BSPP.

Dr Scott's service to the ISPP was exceptional. He was Vice President (1993-98) and President (1998-2003). Subsequently, he was the founding Chairman of the ISPP Task Force on Global Food Security. He also acted as Vice President of ICPP2008 and ICPP2013. His related activities included development of the ISPP website and list-server, which became essential tools for enhancing international communication in plant pathology. In recent years, Peter also personally scanned the early issues of the ISPP Newsletter as PDFs so that the Society website has a complete collection going back to the first issue in 1970.

Of particular note was Dr Scott's work to develop, nurture and maintain the ISPP's official journal Food Security, with Prof Richard Strange, and in partnership with Springer-Nature Publishing, in 2008. Peter had previously led negotiations whereby the BSPP obtained full ownership of the journal *Plant Pathology* from Blackwells in 1986. Peter developed the strategy whereby the ISPP obtained full ownership of *Food Security* in 2024, to enhance scientific independence, and improve the Society's financial security.

This journal initiative had been a direct outcome of Peter's contributions through the ISPP Task Force on Global Food Security, which also included the following:

- Plenary sessions and public discussion fora on themes relating to global food security at ICPP1998, ICPP2003, ICPP2008, ICPP2013 and ICPP2018,
- Formation of the Task Force, in Bangkok, Thailand in 1999,
- Establishment of five key Task Force activities,
- Public fora on global food security at ICPP2003 and ICPP2008,
- The ICPP2003 and ICPP2008 Congress Challenge Awards for short-term projects in plant pathology in Ghana and southern Africa,
- A survey of PhD and MSc courses in plant pathology in developing countries (by Dr Richard Strange) in 2003,
- The paper "Plant disease: a threat to Global Food Security" (Strange & Scott (2005). *Annual Review of Phytopathology*),
- Publication of the *Guide to Identification and Control of Cassava Diseases* (Emmanuel Moses, Ghana, 2008),
- Co-editing a volume of the Springer Book Series Plant Pathology in the 21st Century.

Dr Scott led many of these activities, and continued to inspire the initiative instigated at ICPP1998, which has provided significant and valuable tangible outcomes.

At the ICPP2008 in Torino, Italy, Dr Scott was elected Honorary Member of the ISPP. The ISPP Statutes changed in 2009, making Honorary Members Fellows of the Society (FISPP).

While Dr Scott's research and development contributions were considerable, he is also remembered for his personable warmth and gentle humour, which enriched the lives of those who knew him. His "British" wit was as delightful as it was unexpected, and a constant source of light input amidst most serious discussion. His inherent kindness and constant calm created peace and reassurance, making him an exceptional colleague and friend.

ISPP President, Dr Peter Scott, accepts the Māori "Welcome Ceremony" during the pōwhiri commencing ICPP2003, in New Zealand (photo Greg Johnson).

Some particular vivid memories stand out. In Edinburgh during ICPP1998, Peter's composed demeanour as he awaited Anne, the Princess Royal's (slightly late) attendance, captured his quiet dignity and grace. In the opening ceremony of the First Asian Conference on Plant Pathology (ACPP) in Beijing, China, in 2000, Peter and colleagues from China, Japan and Korea radiated satisfaction at achieving this significant milestone for the international plant pathology community. In Aotearoa New Zealand at the ICPP2003, the image of Peter's participation in the traditional Māori hongi (nose-to-nose greeting), a gesture of respect and connection during the pōwhiri (welcome ceremony) illustrated open-mindedness and willingness to embrace cultural differences. These moments, and many others, show him as a man whose influence extended far beyond his scientific achievements, leaving a lasting legacy and memory of kindness and respect.

In his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture in 1970, Norman Borlaug said: 'I am but one member of a vast team made up of many organizations, officials, thousands of scientists, and millions of farmers - mostly small and humble - who for many years have been fighting a quiet, oftentimes losing war on the food production front.' Peter was a vital member of this global team.

Dr Peter Scott is survived by his wife Gwen, his children Emily and Richard, and his four grandchildren, to whom we convey our deep condolences.

FINALLY, HERE ARE SOME MORE REFLECTIONS FROM HIS COLLEAGUES:

Peter was an accomplished scholar and very astute leader.
(Charlie Delp, USA, ISPP Secretary General 1998 - 2003 and ISPP Historian)

Peter was an accomplished scholar and very astute leader.
(Charlie Delp, USA, ISPP Secretary General 1998-2003 and ISPP Historian)

We all remember what he has done for ISPP
(Yong-Hwan Lee, Republic of Korea, ISPP President 2023-28)

Peter has always been a gentle and personable associate/colleague, with precise, insightful and collaborative approaches to his research, but then his broad and visionary contributions to highlighting the challenges posed by plant pathogens (and other factors) to global food production.
(Richard Falloon, New Zealand, ISPP President 2003-08)

I remember his eyes that reflected his integrity. He helped me so much to bring ICPP to Torino
(M Lodovica Gullino, Italy, ISPP President 2008-13)

His vision for the journal (along with Richard Strange), including the strategy by which ISPP succeeded in obtaining full ownership of the Journal, leaves a permanent legacy. I was glad to be part of that journey over the last 20 years and happy that he received my message (about completing the Journal purchase) last February. I always felt Peter 'willing me on' as we worked through the process to obtain ownership. Of course hearing of Peter's passing reminded me of the 2009 visit to the home of (founding Editor of Food Security) Richard Strange and his wife, Lillian, where my wife and I sat outside with Peter and his wife, Gwen, as well as Zuzana Bernhardt from Springer, to celebrate the journal launch with champagne, lunch, a visit to the nearby Charles Darwin's home, Down House, and Lillian's piano playing, and cake and tea completing the day.
(Greg Johnson, Australia, ISPP President 2013-18)

Peter Scott is a major figure in plant pathology for me. We have again lost an important figure, a so very important and friendly colleague, and a science leader. The younger generation should know Peter Scott's name and the things he did and wrote. I feel that it is our duty to inform them, not because we are old, and as a result, because we like commemorations, statues, medals, and monuments, but because we need examples to follow. Everyone does. Age doesn't matter. Also, because we look into the future with Peter Scott -- we do not dwell in the past. People need to know that Peter Scott is still very much with us, to be grateful to him, and to not be sad.
(Serge Savary, France, ISPP VP 2013-18 & Editor in Chief of 'Food Security' since 2019)

I am really sorry to hear about the passing away of dear Peter. It is a great loss to ISPP and the global family of plant pathology. Our deepest condolences to his family and to ISPP. May his soul rest in peace.
(Wafa El Khoury, Lebanon - ISPP VP 2008-13)

I worked with him on issues related to ISPP as well as on the Crop Protection Compendium. In both cases, he proved to be a low-key dedicated professional who made a difference, especially in the developing world.
(Khaled Makkouk, Lebanon, ISPP Councillor and VP 2018-23)

Truly sorry, but it is beautiful to know he was with his family .. I have really smiling memories of his friendly, kind approach to people. He surely left happy for having done so much for the plant pathologist community but always with the loving attitude.
(Laura Mugnai, Italy - ISPP VP 2023-28).

I am saddened to hear of Peter Scott's passing. He was a wonderful advocate of many causes in ISPP and beyond, including the ISPP Newsletter. I recall several submissions he sent through that I was delighted to include.
(Daniel Hüberli, Australia - Editor, ISPP Newsletter since 2014)

MEETING, TRAINING SCHOOL AND SURVEY ON FOOD LOSS AND WASTE

GIANFRANCO ROMANAZZI

The reduction of food loss and waste is a key priority of FAO, and plant pathogens are responsible for a high share of loss and waste of fruit and vegetables. For this reason, COST CA22134 FoodWaStop is planning a list of activities for working group participants and for all interested participants to share knowledge and best practices. Next general FoodWaStop meeting is planned in Cordoba, Spain, on 4-5 March, and participants interested to contribute with a poster or just attendance can register on the website https://microhibro.com/foodwastop-conference/. Over 150 participants have already registered, and the final program will be released soon.

The Training school on prevention of food loss and waste of fruit and vegetables is planned in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 22-24 May, program draft is at the link https://www.foodwastop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Training-School-Thessaloniki-22-24-5-25.pdf. It is an open call for 15 attendants that want to attend the Training School with their own budget can apply by 28 February. In case you are interested, you will be officially invited with no budget, an can register at the link https://forms.gle/29ik8E1KWUjems4w5; approved participants will be notified by mid March. The day after the closure of the FoodWaStop Training school, the congress https://botryscleromoni.com/ will start.

Another activity of the FoodWaStop is to collect data about food waste at home, since half of the waste occurs in our houses, and as consumers we have to follow appropriate behaviour to minimise the waste and contribute to meet the FAO targets of reduction, allowing more people to get proper food. The questionnaire had over 900 answers from 58 Countries, in case you are interested you can fill it at the link https://www.rescoop.com/limesurvey/index.php?sid=98621&lang=en, it will be useful to rethink our daily behaviours.

FoodWaStop COST CA22134 Action involves over 650 participants form 50 Countries, in case you are interested to join one or more working groups you can find info at the link https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA22134

ENHANCING SOCIAL MEDIA DELIVERY TO PLANT PATHOLOGISTS – ISPP 2023 SURVEY FINAL REPORT

GREG JOHNSON AND ANDREA MASINO

Focussing on the social media offered by plant pathology societies and plant pathologists, a session at ICPP2023 - *APP-titude for Social Media in Plant Disease Research* - considered the use and engagement with social media by plant pathologists, and discussed how to improve social media relevance. This report summarises the findings and subsequent discussions on attitudes to and use of social media as gleaned from an ISPP Survey.

About the Survey. To provide a basis for the session discussions at ICPP, the ISPP conducted a survey of the plant pathology community during 2023 to gauge the ethical use of social media to:

(a) improve access to the latest 'hot' findings in plant pathology and food security
(b) improve extension and enhance contact with farmers and supply chain people
(c) provide services and inspiration through plant pathology societies
(d) support mental health and inspire the spirit
(e) enhance the impact and access to journals and newsletters
(f) promote meetings and report social news about plant pathologists

The survey was publicised as widely as possible to encourage a wide range of responses. The survey aimed to gain insights for the plant pathology societies and plant pathologists who use, don't use, or are considering use of, social media so they might reach their audiences more effectively. The survey questions were formulated through a *Google Form*, road-tested and launched in February 2023. Participants in the survey were asked to provide an email address to help avoid duplicate responses or SPAM but this information remained confidential to ISPP.

At ICPP2023 and in reports via the ISPP Newsletter, survey findings were summarised under:

(a) topics most important to social media readership
(b) platforms respondents use to access plant pathology related topics and inspiration
(c) scientific societies and other sources of plant pathology information and
(d) the demographic profiles of users and non-users.

The Survey remained open to August 2023 with results presented and discussed at ICPP2023 in Lyon with survey results and discussions used to identify opportunities for improving social media use to enhance science outreach, career prospects and well-being of plant pathologists.

In proposing a social media session at ICPP, we asked the question: Is Social Media a Time Waster or a community of trust? We noted that despite varying views, social media can enhance research progress, record keeping and community engagement and about half of 800+ respondents to the ISPP Survey of the international plant pathology community agreed.

Survey Findings. Key findings which may help us to improve social media utility to plant pathologists are presented here.

The report contains overviews of (a) the demographic profiles of users and non-users of social media, (b) insights on the most important topics, (c) favorite platforms used and (d) favorite societies and other sources of information. The report also discusses opportunities for improving progress in science, careers and well-being of plant pathologists and considers the needs of non-users.

How we conducted the survey. The survey was primarily publicised through the ISPP Newsletter with additional publicity through ISPP and other Society and individual plant pathologist' socials, as well as by word-of-mouth and direct contact with the plant pathology community.

Over the seven months of the survey, response promptness and numbers varied depending on the time of the publicity event – Newsletter articles, publicity on ISPP Socials, other society socials and emails, other plant pathologist socials, emails to individual society members: newsletter alerts and (b) when a popular plant pathologists tweeted (15 February). In early August survey participation achieved another boost when the ICPP2023 organisers sent the survey to those on their mailing list.

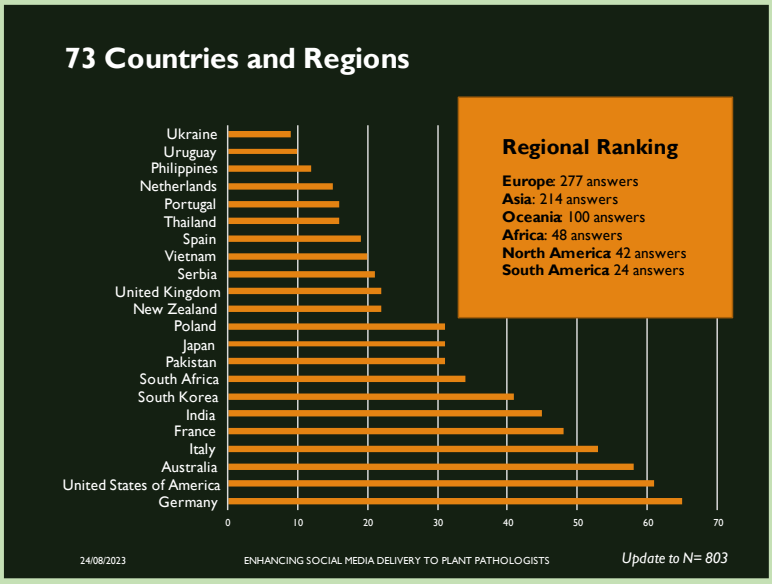


Figure 1. Response numbers by country or region.

Responses came from 73 countries or regions with the data from geographic regions also calculated. No responses were received from mainland China.

Slightly fewer women than men responded with more men than women in the older age groups. The 26-35 age group was the largest cohort (24%), followed by the 36-45 age (21%), the 55-65 age (20%) and the 46-55 age (19%).

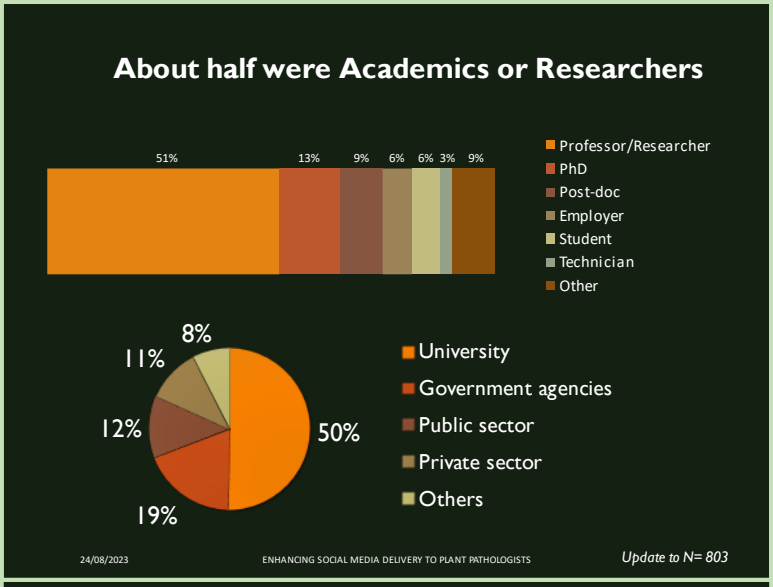


Figure 2. Institutional affiliations of survey respondents.

Two-thirds of respondents were located at universities or government research agencies. About half of respondents were academics or researchers.

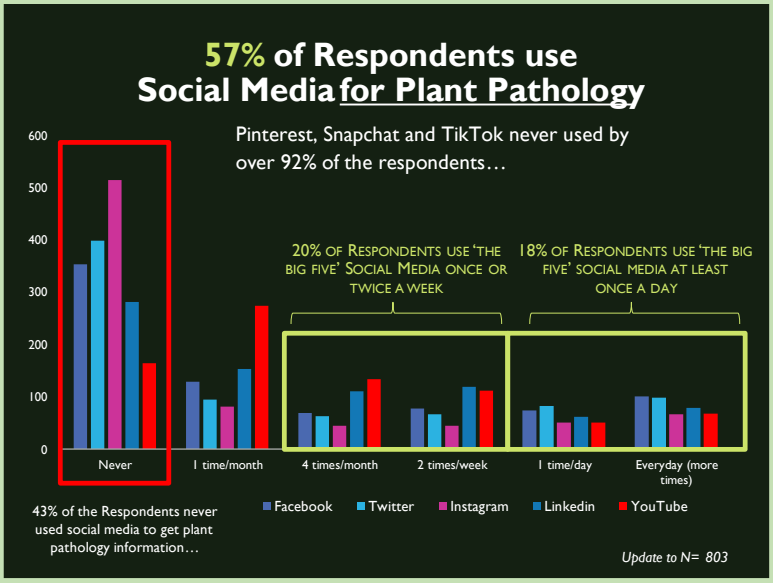


Figure 3. Respondent frequency of use of key social media.

About 43% of respondents never use social media for plant pathology. 38% use the 'big five' (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube) at least once a week and another 19% use them at least once a month. Almost all respondents never use Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok.

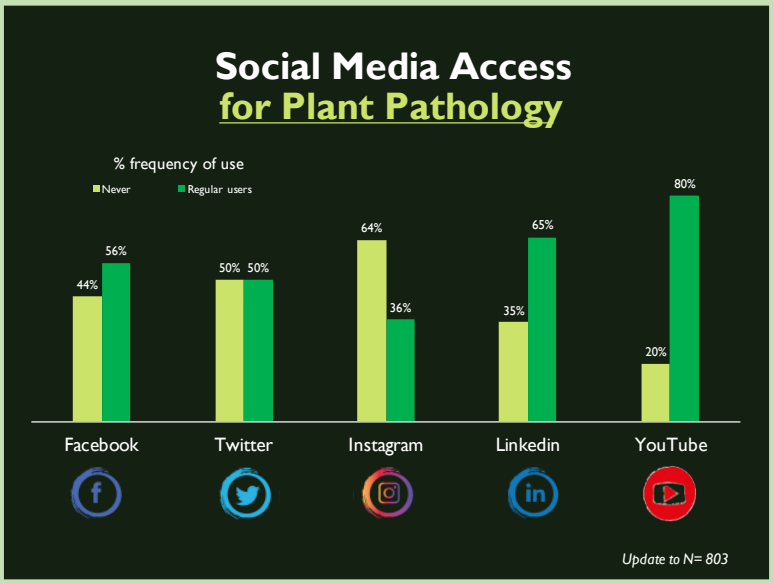


Figure 4. Comparing non-users with regular social media users of each of the 'big five'.

Only 20 % never use YouTube. The high result for use of YouTube is probably 'incidental social media use – via Google searches for 'How-To' videos. About 2/3 of respondents sometimes use LinkedIn, a little over half use Facebook, about half use Twitter (X) though the latter may decline, and almost 2/3 never use Instagram.

Regardless of whether respondents access Society social sites or colleagues' social sites, the relative interest in various topics was similar with conference/workshop news and latest research findings the most popular topics selected.

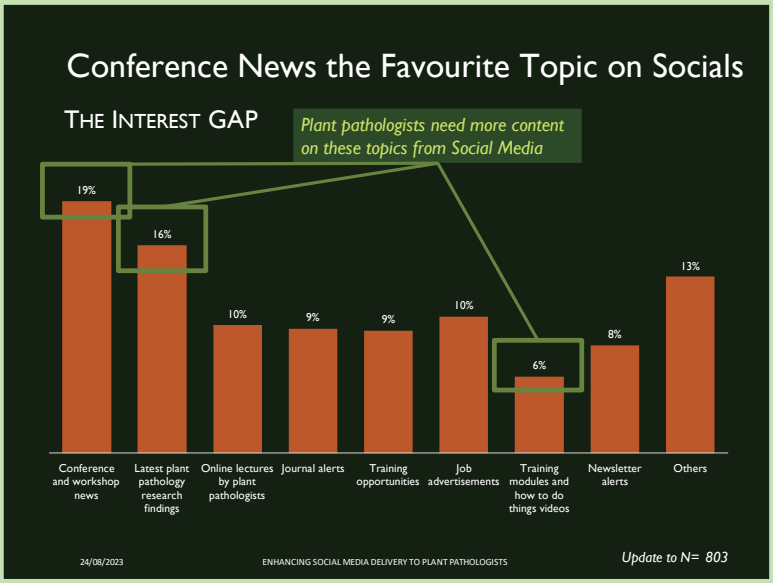


Figure 5. The interest gap – topics identified as in need of greater coverage.

When asked "what do they want to see more of on social media", respondents said they want to see more content on conferences/workshops, latest plant pathology research findings and training modules.

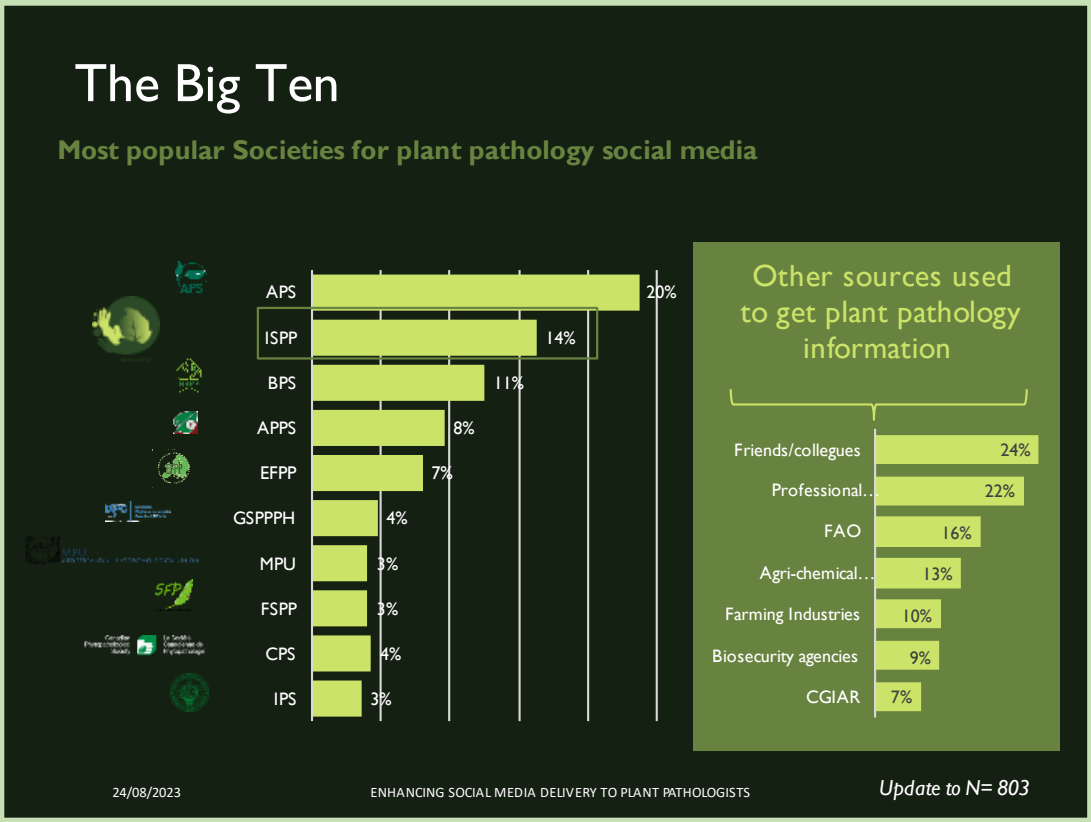


Figure 6. Most popular Society and other social media sites for plant pathology

Among respondents using social media, the American (APS), International (ISPP), British (BSPP) and Australasian (APPS) society socials were most popular. Other sources of plant pathology that were popular included friends and colleagues, professional organisations, the FAO, chemical companies, farming industry bodies, biosecurity agencies and the CGIAR.

Selected survey feedback and conclusions. Social media for plant pathology is sometimes good but improvement is needed:

- May be too widely used by research communities. …from the extension perspective there's lots of opportunities to improve communication with each other and the broader community..."
- Conversely, webinars effectively replace traditional conferences AND save time and money. Despite my age, I use all social media included in the survey. However, these are professional contacts..."
- "…seems to be very inconsistent and generally a low priority when viewed from an international phytopathology perspective. Individual scientists do share interesting and relevant information."

Social medias' value includes:

- Sharing the daily work of researchers to better involve not only the experts, but also those who don't know this sector."
- Alerts of new pathogens on Twitter by colleagues of all over the world, with detailed images added, help us to identify them when they arrive in our areas.
- Gaining importance as a communication tool and in training, especially YouTube and TikTok for lectures in understanding new ideas, inventions and discoveries.
- Vital for engaging students, postgrads, farmers, politicians, policy makers community.

Over half the respondents use social media for plant pathology to some extent. However, the survey failed to capture the use of some platforms or individuals/communities that don't access the platforms listed (but rather use others e.g. China).

What was missing:

- WhatsApp (2 billion +) should be added in the social media list;
- RESEARCHGATE and GOOGLE SCHOLAR also important, WeChat and Cell phone use not captured;
- The Survey methodology did not capture views from situations in which potential respondents would not follow socials or feel free (or able) to answer our survey. Social media usage only reaches about half of the global plant pathology community so more traditional newsletters and website posting remain critical.

Social Media Users consider:

- Socials are not a time waster
- Twitter to be the best platform to engage with other plant pathologists, read up on the most recent findings in the field, and find interesting facts related to plant diseases.
- Essential for engaging students, early career scientists and the talented and enables the young professional to make connections
- Essential in multidisciplinary research
- Essential for engaging with farmers, community and industry.
- Critical for providing seasonal alerts to farmers in some places
- Reaching politicians and policy makers
- Great for exchanging opinions
- Following Groups can be critical (as can for example WhatsAp groups.

How to improve

- Post more often! Some respondents do not often see social media posts from ISPP
- ISPP could be more active in integrating member societies and disseminating plant pathology.

Figure 7. Social media are essential communication tools reaching both ways

Non-user views

- Prefer to read newsletters and websites
- Avoid using as they take too much time
- Mostly considered a 'monumental waste of time'
- Some preferred to restrict social media for "NOT Work" - extra-curricular camaraderie around shared interests.
- Some only use the official websites for information, not social media.

Cautions:

- Obtaining unbiased information is crucial for a plant pathology expert
- Does not allow sufficient filtering of truly relevant information
- It is a question of trust and trustworthiness
- Can be overwhelming, for some - their interest in social media fluctuates over time.

Acknowledgements. On behalf of the ISPP we acknowledge the contributions to publicity for the survey by the ICPP2023 organisers, Daniel Hüberli and the ISPP Newsletter, Associated Societies and colleagues, the 800 + respondents to the survey and M. Lodovica Gullino, Serge Savary and Irene Kernot for comment and advice.

OBITUARY OF JARI VALKONEN, 1964–2024

PROFESSOR MART SAARMA, PROFESSOR KRISTIINA MÄKINEN, AND CHANCELLOR EMERITUS RISTO IHAMUOTILA

Jari P.T. Valkonen (17.06.1964-7.12.2024) was an internationally renowned professor in plant pathology at the University of Helsinki and an active researcher, who died at the age of 60. Jari Valkonen was one of the international leaders in potato virus and potato disease resistance research and the founder of modern plant virology research in Finland. During his career he made numerous important observations and published more than 250 scientific papers. His research on plant virus resistance and gene silencing was pioneering. He also elucidated the mechanisms by which viruses can suppress RNA silencing and overcome plant's defence responses. He used many scientific disciplines to study the surprisingly complex interactions between viruses and crop plants. These studies were crucial to understanding the biology of the important group of potyviruses. His work resulted in the identification of resistance genes to fight viral diseases and to promote sustainable food production. Much of Jari Valkonen's research focused on the important food crops potato, sweet potato, and cassava. More recent research included the development of the moss *Physcomitrella patens* as a model organism for disease resistance studies.

In addition to basic research, Jari Valkonen led applied projects focused on crop disease management and diagnostics. He contributed to the Finnish seed potato industry strategy, where safeguarding plant health is central. Long-term education and development cooperation with Uganda, the Republic of Tanzania, Nicaragua, and India, including studies on sweet potato and cassava viruses, was close to his heart. He was also involved in several EU funded projects. His interest in plant pathogens was wide-ranging. This broad approach, including bacterial and fungal pathogens, is reflected in the wide range of topics covered in the doctoral theses he supervises. He supervised more than 30 doctoral theses. He actively participated in NOVA PhD courses in plant pathology organised by Nordic agricultural universities and faculties. He attended his first course in Denmark in 1992, taught subsequent courses and eventually led excellent courses in Mikkeli, Eastern Finland in 2012 and 2016. Jari served as Editor-in-Chief of Annals of Applied Biology 2009-2014 and edited textbooks.

Jari Valkonen came from a farm in Ristiina, South Savo, which is probably where his love of farming and his work ethic came from and led to a long career in agricultural sciences. He passed his matriculation examination in 1983 at Ristiina Upper Secondary School, and then began studying plant pathology at the University of Helsinki. He did his doctoral work on virus resistance in wild potato species at international research stations (Rothamsted, England 1989 and International Potato Center Peru 1990) and received his PhD from the University of Helsinki in 1993.

He was the most meritorious promovendi, the Doctor primus, at the University of Helsinki's Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry conferment ceremony 1996. He was an Academy of Finland researcher and head of a research group at the Institute of Biotechnology at the University of Helsinki from 1993 to 1997. At the age of 32, Jari Valkonen became Professor of Virology at the Swedish University of Agriculture in Uppsala, before being appointed Professor of Plant Pathology at the University of Helsinki in 2001. He was appointed to a prestigious Finnish Academy Professorship from 2006 to 2011. He has been awarded major prizes, including the NOVA Prize 2004 for promoting Nordic cooperation in plant pathology, the Richard Francki Prize for viral research in 2005 and the Order of the White Rose of Finland, First Class, 2014. He was a member of numerous domestic and foreign scientific societies and the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters from 2004.

In addition to a distinguished scientific career, Jari was talented in music. He sang in the male voice choir Laulu-miehet. Jari was a broadly civilised man and a warm-hearted colleague. His research legacy is carried on by his former students and colleagues. Jari Valkonen will be missed by his family, friends, and the wide international scientific community.

"Adapted from an obituary in Finnish by Professor Mart Saarma, Professor Kristiina Mäkinen and Chancellor Emeritus Risto Ihamuotila of the University of Helsinki. Photo: Veikko Somerpuro"

EUPHRESCO III - VIDEO CONTEST 2025

BALDISSERA GIOVANI, 17 JANUARY 2025

In order to give visibility to national and international research and development activities carried out by plant health scientists and their organisations, the EUPHRESCO (European Phytosanitary Research Cooperation) III network, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies of Bari (CIHEAM Bari), the Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative (PBRI) and CABI are pleased to launch the fourth edition of the video contest 'Plant Health TV - Promoting the importance of plant health research'.

Guidelines for participation and relevant documents are available from the EUPHRESCO III website.

CONFRONTING RISKS OF MIRROR LIFE

A paper by Katarzyna P. Adamala *et al.* titled "Confronting risks of mirror life - Broad discussion is needed to chart a path forward" was published on 12 December 2024 by *Science* (vol. 386, Issue 6728, p. 1351-1353). The abstract is as follows:-

All known life is homochiral. DNA and RNA are made from "righthanded" nucleotides, and proteins are made from "left-handed" amino acids. Driven by curiosity and plausible applications, some researchers had begun work toward creating lifeforms composed entirely of mirror-image biological molecules. Such mirror organisms would constitute a radical departure from known life, and their creation warrants careful consideration. The capability to create mirror life is likely at least a decade away and would require large investments and major technical advances; we thus have an opportunity to consider and preempt risks before they are realized. Here, we draw on an indepth analysis of current technical barriers, how they might be eroded by technological progress, and what we deem to be unprecedented and largely overlooked risks (1). We call for broader discussion among the global research community, policy-makers, research funders, industry, civil society, and the public to chart an appropriate path forward.

Read paper.

THE 2030 DECLARATION ON SCIENTIFIC PLANT AND FUNGAL COLLECTING

A review by Alexandre Antonelli *et al.* titled "The 2030 declaration on scientific plant and fungal collecting" was published on 30 September 2024 by *Plants, Science, Planet* (vol. 7, Issue 1, p. 11-22). The abstract is as follows:-

Societal Impact Statement

Biological samples and their associated information are an essential resource used by scientists, governments, policymakers, practitioners and communities to ensure that biodiversity can be appropriately protected and sustainably used. Yet, considering the enormous task of documenting the vast numbers of as-yet-unknown plant and fungal species, greater international coordination for biological collecting and recording is necessary, built on equitable collecting practices and standards. Here, we propose five commitments to accelerate and enhance scientific knowledge of plant and fungal diversity, while increasing collaboration, benefit sharing and efficiency.

Summary

Almost all life depends on plants and fungi, making knowledge of their diversity and distribution—primarily derived from biological collections—fundamental to national and international conservation, restoration and sustainable use commitments. However, it is estimated that some 15% of all plant species and over 90% of all fungal species have not yet been scientifically described, hampering our ability to assess and demonstrate the impact of efforts to halt biodiversity loss. In addition, organisations and researchers around the world lack a concerted strategy for increasing complementarity and avoiding overlap in botanical and mycological research, particularly in relation to the collection of specimens. We here present the 2030 Declaration on Scientific Plant and Fungal Collecting, summarising a commitment towards such a necessary strategy. Its components were identified from discussions during and after a series of four workshops and plenary discussions at the 2023 State of the World's Plants and Fungi symposium convened by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and were then consolidated into the present form by the authors. The Declaration was subsequently opened up for endorsement by signatories. Collectively, we agree on a set of five commitments for cataloguing the world's flora and funga, designed to maximise efficiency, facilitate knowledge exchange and promote equitable collaborations: (1) use evidence-based collection strategies; (2) strengthen local capacity; (3) collaborate across taxa and disciplines; (4) collect for the future; and (5) share the benefits. This Declaration is a first step towards increased global and regional coordination of scientific collecting efforts.

Read paper.

APS COURSE ON DEVELOPING AND VALIDATING SEED HEALTH ASSAYS

LINDSEY DU TOIT, VICE-CHAIR OF ISPP SEED PATHOLOGY COMMITTEE

In the autumn of 2023, the American Phytopathological Society (APS) offered the online Seed Pathology Fundamentals course, which continues to be offered asynchronously by APS. Given the tremendous success of that course (422 'live' registrants attended in 2023, and many have been taking the course asynchronously since 2024), Gary Munkvold (Iowa State University) and I are organising a follow-up course on Developing and Validating Seed Health Assays. Below is a list of the dates this second course will be offered in 2025, from 11th Feb. to 15th Apr., every Tuesday from 7:00-8:15 am PT (10:00-11:15 am ET). The course schedule and focus topic of each session are listed below:

General aspects and seed health assay-related organisations/groups

11 Feb	Course overview and NSHS involvement in seed health assays in the USA
18 Feb	ISHI and ISTA/ISF
25 Feb	NPDN and DAVN
4 Mar	USDA-APHIS and NPPOs

Development and validation of different methods of seed health assays using case studies to illustrate:

11 Mar	Developing and validating PCR-based methods (regular and real-time), with virus and viroid case studies
18 Mar	Developing and validating ELISA methods, with cucurbit viruses as a case study
25 Mar	Developing and validating direct assays (fungal and bacterial plating & grow-outs), with case studies
1 Apr	Developing and validating high throughput sequencing (HTS) methods for seed health testing, with case studies
8 Apr	*Acidovorax citrulli* case study of a seedborne pathogen that has involved multiple seed health assay methods

Summary/wrap-up

April 15	Course summary, standards for reviews of manuscripts on seed health assay development and validation

The course dives into best practices for developing and validating robust seed health assays. Whether you're involved in research, industry, or regulatory settings, this course is tailored to meet diverse needs. It also is a great resource for editors and reviewers working on seed health-related manuscripts for publications or proposals for funding.

Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your understanding of seed health assay development and validation — secure your spot by registering today.

CURRENT VACANCIES

No current vacancies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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COMING EVENTS

11th Symposium on Plant Protection and Plant Health International (PPPHI)
18 February – 19 February, 2025
Braunschweig, Germany
Website: ppphi.plant-protection.net

International Organization of Citrus Virologists (IOCV) XXIII Conference
16 March – 20 March, 2025
Mildura, Victoria, Australia
Website: www.iocvaustralia2025.org.au

Joint meeting of the 70th Conference on Soilborne Plant Pathogens and the APS Pacific Division
25 March – 27 March, 2025
University of California, Davis, USA
Website: soilfungus.wsu.edu

International Symposium on Plant Pathogenic Sclerotiniaceae - BotryScleroMoni 2025. Joint meetings of XIX International *Botrytis* Symposium, XVII International *Sclerotinia* Workshop, and II International *Monilinia* Workshop
25 May – 30 May, 2025
Thessaloniki, Greece
Website: botryscleromoni.com

Australasian Plant Pathology Society Conference
26 May – 28 May, 2025
International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour, Sydney, Australia
Website: www.apps2025.org

14th Conference of the European Foundation for Plant Pathology (EFPP)
2 June – 5 June, 2025
Uppsala, Sweden
Website: www.efpp2025.com

XVII Working Group "Biological and integrated control of plant pathogens." From single microbes to microbiome targeting One Health.
11 June – 14 June, 2025
University of Torino, Torino, Italy
Contacts: Davide Spadaro and Monica Mezzalama
Email: iobc2025@symposium.it
Website: www.iobctorino2025.org

17th Congress of the Mediterranean Phytopathological Union - New phytopathology frontiers of research and education for plant health and food safety
7 July – 10 July, 2025
Ciheam-Bari, Italy
Contact and Email: Anna Maria D'Onghia
mpu2025@iamb.it
Website: www.mpunion.org

13th International Workshop on Grapevine Trunk Diseases
21 July – 25 July, 2025
Ensenada, Baja California, México
Contact and Email: Rufina Hernández
13iwgtd@cicese.mx
Website: 13iwgtd.cicese.mx

Plant Health 2025
2 August – 5 August, 2025
Honolulu, Hawaii
Website:
www.apsnet.org/meetings/annual/PH2025/Pages/default.aspx

Conference of the IOBC/WPRS Working Group "Integrated Protection in Viticulture"
13 October – 15 October, 2025
Mikulov, Czech Republic
Website: event.fourwaves.com/ipvc/pages

14th Arab Congress of Plant Protection Sciences
3 November – 7 November, 2025
Algeria city, Algeria
Contact and Email: info@acpp-aspp.com
Website: acpp-aspp.com

8th International Bacterial Wilt Symposium (IBWS)
22 March – 26 March, 2026
Wageningen, the Netherlands
Website: event.wur.nl/ibws2026

13th International Congress of Plant Pathology 2028
19 August – 25 August, 2028
Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia
Website: www.icpp2028.org

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PLANT PATHOLOGY (ISPP)

WWW.ISPPWEB.ORG

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