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# The internationalization of the Royal Netherlands Society of Plant Pathology

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## KNPV

The Royal Netherlands Society of Plant Pathology (KNPV) is the oldest plant pathology society in the world. It was founded by prof. Ritzema Bos in 1891 and has 613 members.
The KNPV previously published the Netherlands Journal of Plant Pathology that was sold to Kluwer and became the European Journal of Plant Pathology that is currently published by Springer. In addition, the KNPV published 236 issues of the Dutch journal Gewasbescherming (Crop Protection) that celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2009.

The KNPV has a range of multidisciplinary working groups that specifically focus on particular hosts, plant pathogens or pests. These working groups meet annually and organize expert symposia and excursions. As such, KNPV assures the continuous link to agricultural practice.
KNPV also provides grants to stimulate co-operation and exchange of information, e.g. internship grants for student members or sponsoring of scientific events. Finally, KNPV organizes two national meetings per year and every three years a Crop Protection Manifestation along with national partners such as the Foundation Willie Commelin Scholten for Phytopathology (WCS).
At this event, the prestigious KNPV Award is presented.

## National impact

Both KNPV and WCS, have a rich and intertwined heritage. Eventually, this has lead to the formation of plant pathology research groups at Utrecht University, the University of Amsterdam, and Wageningen University, and the establishment of the renown Central Bureau of Fungal Cultures and the Dutch Plant Protection Service. For example, WCS director Johanna Westerdijk was the first female professor in the Netherlands.
She performed the explorative work on Dutch Elm disease that provided a firm basis for all subsequent international research programs on this disease.

*Young and wild meets old and wise.*

Recently, KNPV and WCS sponsored a program to attract high school students to the discipline of plant pathology that resulted in a website and teaching modules aimed at Dutch High School students (www.plantenziektekunde.nl), a website aimed at MSc students that want to do a thesis or internship in plant pathology in the Netherlands (www.plantpathology.nl), and e-learning modules for international students.

## Internationalization

As a result of this program, KNPV has decided to broaden its national scope and start an internationalization process.
We have particularly approached the American Phytopathological Society (APS) for intensive collaboration. We therefore joined the Plant Management Network (PMN) to provide our members with extensive documentation of a range of plant pathology resources that are available at PMN.

Members are also stimulated to contribute to PMN as currently it has a strong focus on agriculture in the United States of America. Hence, participation of the KNPV in PMN will also broaden its basis to regionally different plant pathology issues.

## International meetings

Furthermore, KNPV and APS partner with the European Foundation for Plant Pathology (EFPP) to organize the First Conference on Climate Change and Pest Control in Agriculture in 2010.
This international meeting will take place in Portugal and brings top climate change scientist together with experts in plant pathology.

A changing climate likely favors the introduction of new plant pathogens in agricultural crops and has a huge impact on the population structure of existing plant pathogens. Experiments using historical samples from the famous Broad Balk experiment at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden, UK, that cover a period over 150 years have shown that $SO_2$ pollution had a major effect on the occurrence of *Septoria tritici* blotch in wheat. Likewise, changes in a range of toxigenic *Fusarium* species in cereals all over Europe requires a better understanding of climatological effects on the distribution of fungal species. As the long term climate change models show a huge deficit of water that is available for agriculture in Africa, the meeting will particularly focus on the effects of climate change on agriculture in least developed countries.

This strategic meeting will prioritize the impact of climate change on agricultural pest control.

Thus far, climate change has been considered to impact global agricultural production, but the effect on plant pathogens has been largely overlooked.

Hence, APS, KNPV and EFPP have decided to bridge the gap between these disciplines in order to develop strategies to diagnose problems in plant disease control and to anticipate on new pathogen introductions and changing populations that urgently require timely action.

## Co-operation with APS

In addition to participation in PMN and the organization of meetings, KNPV has agreed with APS to collaborate on image libraries, student projects and e-learning and outreach materials that are currently being developed.

Finally, KNPV, with its strong alliance to national universities with major international student populations, provides fellowships to international students from developing countries that will substantially benefit from the collaboration between APS and KNPV.

We foresee that members of APS and KNPV will reciprocally benefit from and contribute to this alliance. KNPV is happy that this collaboration worked out so nicely and it prepares us for a new era of plant pathology. As plant pathogens do not respect borders, both APS and KNPV have strategically decided to slash all potential limitations in exchange and will continue to further explore options for multilateral collaboration.

*More information can be found at our society website: www.knpv.org/en/*



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