

March 2024



President: Prof. Mike Gooding, PhD

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Our Mission

“to further the application of biology to the production of food, materials, and energy, and for the maintenance and improvement of the earth’s environment”

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AAB Early Career Professional members (AAB ECP) eligible for FREE Online registration to *ANY* AAB-organised hybrid event, AAB ECP non-members pay a nominal fee (£5) for access and also gain free membership!



Crop Production in Northern Britain Conference

27 & 28th February 2024

By Professor Fiona Burnett, SRUC

This long established, biennial conference – fondly known by regular attendees as ‘the Dundee Conference’ - tackles all things related to sustainable crop production in northern climates. This was the first time CPNB had been organised by AAB, so the organising committee and attendees were delighted by the success of the conference.

The CPNB conference attracts a unique mix of researchers, policy makers, agronomists, growers and industry representatives and seeks to deliver applied and topical platform presentations and posters to the diverse audience. Discussion sessions are always lively and stimulating as are the conversations during breaks and poster sessions. Structured over three main sessions, covering agri-environment, combinable crops and potatoes, invited key note papers set the tone for each session.

An opening welcome from the Scottish Minister for Green skills, Circular economy and Biodiversity Ms Lorna Slater, was followed by a sobering and thought provoking key note from Dr Mike Rivington of the James Hutton Institute which illustrated how the climate in the north of Britain is changing more rapidly than expected, and the urgency with which changes will have to be made. This was followed by papers on the impact and challenges of reduced tillage, and the integration of alternative biological control methods into crop systems. With additional papers on long term data sets and decision support, the audience agreed on the urgent need to coordinate data and make it accessible to researcher and industry needs.

Dr James Brosnan, Director of Research at the Scotch Whisky Research Institute opened the Combinables session with an insightful key note paper on the needs and direction of the whisky industry as it works to improve sustainability, and was a great example of the highly relevant nature of the conference.

Key diseases, resistance management, agronomy, food safety, novel detection methods and new endophytic products that reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer in crops were covered in the following papers.



James Brosnan introduces the BARITONE barley network.

<https://barleyhub.org/teaching-education/baritone/>

The second day was devoted to potatoes and the two key note papers were typical of the integration of research and applied practice the conference tries to deliver.

Dr Ewen Mullins, Head of Crop Science at Teagasc highlighted the role of new breeding technologies, and local Fife farmer, David Bell spoke tellingly on his perspective of integrated management strategies at the sharp end. While the key note papers are important to each session, one of the very pleasing things about the conference is its open and inclusive nature and the respectful nature of discussions.



AAB Nematology Specialist Group member Dr James Price introduces the PCN Action Scotland. <https://www.pcnhub.ac.uk/>

Students and early career delegates are encouraged to attend and gratifyingly several papers from PhD students were presented, with a couple more from people now established in the industry who first presented as students at previous CPNB conferences.

Thanks are extended to Geraint Parry, the AAB Team and to the CPNB Organizing committee, session chairs and all who spoke or contributed.

We are looking forward to CPNB 2026 already.



THE DUNDEE CONFERENCE
CROP PRODUCTION
IN NORTHERN BRITAIN 2024

Report on the Royal Society of Biology's Voice of the Future 2024 event

By Miles Curl, PhD Student in the Borrill Group, John Innes Centre.

On Tuesday 12th March, I was given the unique opportunity to attend this year's Voice of the Future event, at the House of Commons, Westminster, organised by the Royal Society of Biology (RSB). The distinctive event, attended by multiple STEM-focused UK associations and societies, provides early career researchers to ask their pressing science policy-based questions to UK Parliament Ministers and Lords. It has been described by the RSB as a format reversal of the Parliamentary Select Committee, where fellow new scientists and I were sat in seats occupied normally by members of Parliament. Instead, the MPs and Lords were in the witness seats poised to answer to our examinations on matters ranging from AI and its role in medical service provision, to improving the UK's science education curriculum.

On behalf of the Association of Applied Biologists, I asked Chi Onwurah MP, the Shadow Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, **how a future UK government can work collaboratively with other nations to improve global agricultural productivity and sustainability, especially in times of large climatic changes to many low economically developed countries.** The Shadow Minister, who serves as a Labour MP for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, acknowledged the need for international collaboration on issues of agricultural sustainability and food security, and highlighted the importance of participation of UK researchers to the Horizon Europe project for maintaining collaboration. Furthermore, she signified the continued support for many UK-based plant science and agricultural research organisations, such as Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Rothamsted Research, indicating how their new scientific findings and outputs are key to improving sustainability and increasing global yields.



Live action of Miles asking his question. Photo: RSB

In the following session, members of the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee Katherine Fletcher MP, Stephen Metcalfe MP and Carol Monaghan MP took the witness stand to field questions from societies including the British Ecological Society and the Anatomical Society, followed in the final session by questions from societies including the Genetics Society to Lord Drayson and the RSB's former director of parliamentary affairs, Viscount Stansgate.

Collectively, the answers provided by these senior political figures were highly motivating because of their explained commitment to advancing the UK's scientific capability. Likewise, it demonstrated Parliament's need for research conducted by today's young researchers for the ascertainment of knowledge in fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths which help benefit wider society and the planet we rely upon.

No pressure, then.

Report by Katia Zacharaki, Project Manager at Vertical Future

I had the privilege of attending the Voice of the Future event organised by the Royal Association of Biologists, held at the House of Commons on March 12th. As a member of the Association of Applied Biologists, I found it particularly enlightening to witness the collaborative effort among various STEM disciplines, represented by different organisations, coming together to voice their concerns and questions to parliamentary panels.

The event was marked by the active participation of young researchers and scientists who seized the opportunity to address pertinent issues affecting the future of agriculture and the supply chain. One notable encounter was with Eleftheria Trampari representing the Applied Microbiology International, who shared insights into the exploration of agnostic microbial in vertical farming to combat pathogenic human pathogens.



The AAB representatives at the VoF event. L-R Katia Zacharaki, Anna Tilling, Miles Curl, Natasha Lawson-Hale. Photo: RSB

Alongside Eleftheria, I met with fellow members of the Association of Applied Biologists - Myles, Anna, and Natasha, who did not know before this event. Myles had the honour of posing a question on behalf of our association, while Anna and Natasha, both junior researchers, shared their work on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) solutions at CABI, focusing on exploring alternative biological controls.

During the parliamentary session, discussions delved into the challenges researchers face in communicating their findings effectively to the public. There was a consensus that research often remains inaccessible due to its complex nature and academic jargon. The importance of bridging this communication gap was emphasised, highlighting the need for researchers to convey their work in plain language to ensure broader understanding and engagement from the public.

Some of the conversations in the session addressed the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in revolutionising various sectors, including healthcare. While AI presents tremendous opportunities, concerns were raised regarding data management and public perception. It was stressed that careful consideration must be given to these aspects to ensure responsible AI deployment and mitigate potential risks. A surprising revelation came regarding talent acquisition, with a shift in focus towards broadening baseline education in STEM subjects from early childhood. The emphasis was on nurturing a deeper understanding of STEM disciplines across all levels of education, allowing talent to naturally emerge rather than solely targeting highly skilled individuals.

For further information on the event and questions asked, do read the RSB's news article of this year's event at Parliamentarians questioned by scientists in Voice of the Future 2024 over key issues: AI, food security, and STEM job pipelines ([rsb.org.uk](https://www.rsb.org.uk)), as well as previous iterations of the occasion at Voice of the Future ([rsb.org.uk](https://www.rsb.org.uk)).

I would like to thank the AAB for the chance to attend the event and look forward to continued participation and representation of the Association in the future.

<https://www.rsb.org.uk/news/parliamentarians-questioned-by-scientists-in-voice-of-the-future-2024-over-key-issues-ai-food-security-and-stem-job-pipelines>



Upcoming Events in 2024



Hosted online and at
Harper Adams, UK

**6th Symposium of Potato Cyst
Nematode Management**
September 10-11 2024

Invited Speakers
James Price (JHI)
Sebastian Eves-van den Akker (Cambridge)
Misghina Teklu (WUR)


<https://cvent.me/0OKzgB>



Hosted online and at
University of Aberystwyth, UK

Biomass and Energy Crops VI
October 1-3 2024
PLEASE SAVE THE DATE

<https://cvent.me/yKqGXw>



Hosted online and at Ondokuz
Mayis University, Samsun, Turkey

**5th AAB-PlantEd Congress:
Agricultural Biotechnology in the Era of
Genome Editing**
October 29-31 2024

Confirmed Speakers:
- Johnathan Napier; Rothamsted Research, UK
- Goetz Hensel; HHU, Germany

Abstract Submission Deadline: July 15th
Website: <https://cvent.me/1AOXZa>

Acrylamide and process formed contaminants: A supply chain approach

September 4th-5th 2024

The Museum of Natural Sciences
Brussels

Event Webpage: <https://cvent.me/aOONKZ>



Confirmed Speakers:

Frans Verstraete
Benedikt Cramer
Manuel Coimbra
Andy Curtis
Franco Pedreschi
Zuzana Ciesarova
Vural Gokmen
Friedrich Longin
Christine Nowakowski
Jane Parker
Marco Arlorio
Marta Mesias
Elena Baldoni
Elena Bartkiene
Navneet Kaur

Abstract Submission for Oral Presentations is OPEN



Co-organised by the ACRYRED
Cost Action, the International
Life Sciences Institute and the
Association of Applied Biologists.

Cereal Quality for Sustainable Production and Human Health

AAB President's Meeting

Hosted online and at
University of Birmingham, UK
September 17th-18th 2024

Plenary Lecture:

Professor Guy Poppy, *BBSRC Interim Executive Chair and University of Southampton*



Keynote Speakers:

Professor Martin Broadley, *Rothamsted Research Director of the Sustainable Soils and Crops Strategic Area*

Dr Cathrina Edwards, *Quadram Institute Research Lead to Optimise Nutrient Release from Plant-based Foods*

Professor Nigel Halford, *Gene Editing to Improve Cereal Quality, Rothamsted Research*

Dr Catherine Howarth, *Improving the Oat Crop for Sustainability and Quality, IBERS*

Convenor:

Professor Mike Gooding, *current President of the Association of Applied Biologists*

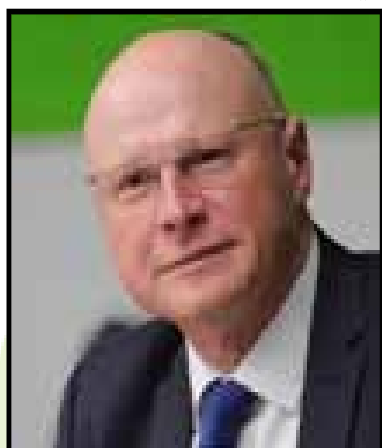
Abstract Submission for Oral and Poster Presentations open until **June 30th/ July 31st 2024**
Website: <https://cvent.me/WPvk5G>

AAB-PlantEd Specialist Group Webinar Series.

*Technical Advances and Policy Updates
on Gene-Editing in Plants*

Tuesday April 9th 2024 at 3pm CET

Register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpcu-tqz0uHNyNWcao7U7Y9vj39E-qbhE_



Ivo Frebort, Palacký University Olomouc,
Czech Republic

An update on the regulation of NGT
plants in the EU

Bing Yang, Donald Danforth Centre,
St Louis, USA

Genome-Editing to Dissect Rice
Susceptibility and Resistance to Bacterial
Blight



PlantEd
aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

AAB Obituaries

We are sad to report on the recent passing of **Michael van den Driessche**. Mike was a past Hon. Treasurer of the AAB. Current AAB Council members, Mike Gooding and Martin Parry fondly remember visiting Mike at his farm for AAB meetings.

Michael went to school at Rendcombe College near Cirencester, studied Natural Sciences at Selwyn College Cambridge and Mycology at Imperial College at Silwood, an “outpost” of the college. His daughter recalls that he used to reminisce about his time at the Plant Breeding Institute, and pea-vining in the holidays! Mike moved to Beecham Research Laboratories in the late 1960s and then in 1974 changed horses and became an accountant, which took him for a time to work in the City with the London Metal Exchange.



Helmut Van Emben, now Emeritus Professor at the University of Reading was President of the AAB between 2001-2002 when Mike was Treasurer and provided this tribute; ‘I met Mike when I became President of the AAB. He was a remarkably astute Hon. Treasurer of the AAB. I had recently finished a 10 year stint .as Hon. Treasurer of the Royal Entomological Society, where I had the support of a very financially-competent registrar managing our investments. What impressed me about Mike was that he managed the finances of the AAB without such professional assistance.

All at AAB give our condolences to Mike’s family.

It is with sadness that we learnt that **AAB Honorary Member Professor Diana Wall** passed away on March 25th.

Please read this generous obituary published by her employers at Colorado State University

<https://source.colostate.edu/diana-wall/>



Update from Annals of Applied Biology

Annals is owned by the Association of Applied Biologists and as such all the journal revenue returns to the scientific community through organisation of events in relevant topic areas.

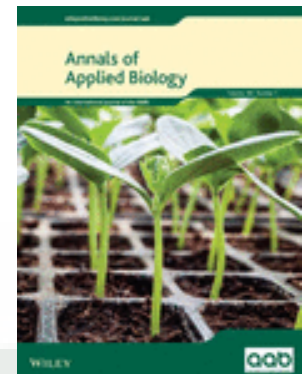
The March 2024 edition of Annals is now available

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17447348/2024/184/2>

We are excited to have Annals recently publish a Forum article that has its genesis in the 2022 AAB IPM meeting.

This article is co-authored by Keith Walters, Kristina Grenz, Josh Burnstone, Toby Bruce, Rosemary Collier and Geraint Parry.

This article looks at the current constraints and solutions for development and uptake of IPM technologies in the UK.



Annals of Applied Biology

An international journal of the **aab**



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ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS
WILEY

Constraints and solutions for development and uptake of integrated pest management in the UK

Keith Walters et al
Imperial College and Harper Adams University, UK

Agricultural improvements that reduce conventional pesticide use and support environmental aims are a priority. Current approaches develop promising alternative products but meet significant challenges in bringing them to market.

Interrelated recommendations were agreed upon, focused on structured gap analysis, co-design processes reflecting the complete innovation system, the approval process, application equipment, enhancing grower confidence, integrating knowledge exchange activities, promulgation of public good information and the need for an overarching national action plan and supporting legislation.



Annals of Applied Biology

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Additional Special Issues:

Advances in Pesticide Application

in association with the International Advances in Pesticide Application 2024 Conference.

Paper Submission Deadline: 30 June 2024

Potato Cyst Nematode Management

in association with the 6th Symposium of Potato Cyst Nematode Management

Paper Submission Deadline: 31 December 2024

Biomass and Energy Crops

in association with the AAB event, Biomass and Energy Crops VI, October 2024

Paper Submission Deadline: 31 December 2024

WILEY



AAB are a member of the Royal Society of Biology Parliamentary Steering Group.

As part of this involvement we receive parliamentary updates from Susie Rabin who is RSB Associate Director of Parliamentary & Public Affairs.

March 25th 2024

Current Relevant Consultations

The Government has opened a consultation on food labelling. The consultation looks at how to improve country of origin labelling for certain goods, including how and where this information is displayed and what products should be included. The consultation will run until 7 May 2024

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-launched-to-make-food-labelling-fairer-and-clearer>

Animals in Science Committee asked for advice to help shape government policy. Andrew Sharpe has asked the Animals in Science Committee to develop guidance that will inform the government's policy direction on regulation, including the use of decapods—a type of crustacean—in research.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animals-in-science-ministerial-commission-2024>

The AAB News Hub

A dedicated section for generic news content which may be of interest to our members and associates. These articles may range from current events, blogs, or discussion topics right the way through to some professionally published content. We are more than happy to receive additional content from our readers. If you come across an article or a newspaper column which you think would be of interest to our members please feel free to send it to

John (john@aab.org.uk)

- [Kew Gardens: New display showcases the sound of blossom](#) (BBC)
- [Botanic Gardens: Researchers and residents collaborate on climate](#) (BBC)
- [Menu signed by Albert Einstein sells for £18,000 at Somerset auction](#) (BBC)
- NewScientist Podcast ([Link](#))
- Nature ([News](#))
- [Sycamore Gap: New life springs from rescued tree](#) (BBC)
- [Sycamore Gap tree: The story so far](#) (BBC)



We are writing to encourage you to join AAB in 2024

Join a community of 1000+ like-minded professionals that also has significant financial benefits, especially for early career professionals (ECPs).

2024 Membership fees:

Regular members: £65

Early Career Professional members: £22

(anyone within 5 years of finishing full-time education; bachelor or graduate study including career breaks)

Retired members: £33.50

Membership benefits:

- **Reduced fees for ALL AAB events.** Regular members pay £100 and ECP members pay £50 **LESS** than equivalent non-members to attend AAB in-person events. ECP members can join events as an online delegate for free.
- **20% discount on Article Publishing Charges when publishing to Plant Biotechnology Journal**
- **ECPs are eligible for travel grants to any AAB event (up to £300)**
- **All members are eligible for Carer grants (up to £500)**
- **Eligibility to apply for Federation of European Society of Plant Biology short term mobility grants (up to €3000)**
- **Consideration for Fellowship of AAB (F Appl. Biol.) after seven years of continuous membership**
- **30% discount for online purchase of 'Aspects of Applied Biology'**
- **Reciprocal 50% reduction in membership fees with the Royal Society of Biology**
- **Invitation to contribute events and job opportunities to the monthly AAB newsletter circulated to 3500+ scientists**
- **Opportunity to join an AAB Specialist Group, which determine AAB activities.**
 - Applied Plant Pathology
 - Biocontrol and IPM
 - Food Systems
 - Nematology
 - PlantEd Gene Editing
 - Soil and Root Biology
 - Applied Tree and Forest Biology
 - Cropping and the Environment
 - Horticultural Quality and Food Loss
 - Pesticide Application
 - Plant Physiology and Crop Improvement
 - Virology

Professor Mike Gooding, AAB President

Dr Geraint Parry, AAB Executive Officer

www.aab.org.uk/membership

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