



Contents

AAB News.....	2
Upcoming AAB Events.....	3
Events in our Community.....	5
Community News.....	7
Career Development Opportunities.....	8
Meeting Report - Parliamentary Links Day.....	9
Meeting Report - Acrylamide in Cereal Products.....	11
Meeting Reports - Photosynthesis 2026.....	13
Membership.....	17
Call for Papers.....	18
AAB Specialist Groups.....	19
AAB Council.....	20
AAB Office & Contact.....	21



... Photosynthesis

We're still riding on a high after a phenomenal week in Liverpool for the International Conference on Photosynthesis Research (ICPR) 2026. In this issue you can read the first batch of meeting reports from our early-career travel awardees from page 13.



... Policy

Bringing together science and policy, read the report from the AAB delegation that headed to Parliamentary Links Day at the end of June, from page 9.

In our Career Development Opportunities section (page 8) there's also a chance for PhD students to nab a policy-influencing internship!



... Acrylamide Reduction

After a fantastic meeting with the ACRYRED Cost Action community in Palermo in June, we bring you yet another early-career travel report (page 11) and a positive step forward in getting new precision-bred varieties to market on page 7.



AAB News

Welcome to the 'Summer' edition of the AAB newsletter - the team have been as busy as the bees in our gardens these last couple of months so this edition is overflowing with all the latest from our society & beyond.

Summer break?

The eagle-eyed amongst you may have noticed a distinct lack of our July newsletter, whilst we'd love to report this due to a prolonged summer holiday, the last few months at the AAB have been anything but! With preparations running full-steam ahead for the International Conference on Photosynthesis Research (ICPR) 2026 and our autumn meetings, Geraint was knocked down by a nasty infection at the end of June resulting in a prolonged hospital stay and eventual amputation. Thankfully he was able to power on through and continue working from the ward, but we're very happy that he's back healthy and at full capacity (albeit a digit lighter!) I'm sure you'll all join me in wishing him well as he continues to heal!

Photosynthesis 2026

Office news aside, the big event in July was of course ICPR26. In a culmination of 4 years of planning (on Geraint's part at least!) 750 photosynthesis researchers from around the world descended on the UK and Liverpool for ICPR26 and its many satellites. And what a phenomenal week it was - you can read all 'aabout' it in our early-career meeting reports over the coming issues (starting here on page 13), watch the highlights reel on [YouTube](#) and see snapshots from the week over on the AAB [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

It was our absolute pleasure to organise ICPR26 on behalf on the International Society of Photosynthesis Research (ISPR) and UK-based committee, including AAB Publications Officer and former-President Christine Foyer. We'd like to extend a huge congratulations to the ISPR 2026 award winners: Chris Gisriel (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Adrien Burlacot (Carnegie Science), Tracy Lawson (University of Illinois) and Bob Blankenship (Washington University in St. Louis). And with more than 370 posters presented across the meeting, congratulations also to the Early-Career Poster Prize winners: Zitong Yang, Adam Lee, Ludovico Caracciolo, Kim Janssen, Jarne Berentsen, Hao Zhou, Haley Schrader and Efrén González.



Touch and go but in the end both Geraint & Jordan made it to Liverpool for ICPR26!

AAB Impact Factors

Finally, we're happy to announce that the Impact Factor of both our journals has risen! Plant Biotechnology Journal has now achieved an IF of 12.8: ranking 7th in Biotechnology and Applied Microbiology and 8th in Plant Science. And Annals of Applied Biology has risen from 1.8 to 2.1! A huge credit to the hard work of our editorial teams, reviewers & authors - we're very grateful for all they do - and of course to everyone who chooses to publish in a society-owned journal. Our journal income is pumped directly back into society activities: helping us subsidise events and travel grants, and generally keeping us ticking along, so thank you all for supporting our journals!

Upcoming AAB Events

Webinar 'all aabout' Plant Genome Editing

15th September, 2pm BST

The next webinar in the AAB-PlantEd series will feature talks from Ralf Wilhelm (Julius Kühn-Institut) and Robert HOFFIE (IPK Gatersleben)

[Register for free](#)



International Symposium on Rice Functional Genomics 2026

8-10th September 2026, London UK

Organised on behalf of Oryzanet, the 23rd ISRFG will bring together a global community of rice researchers at the Royal Society of London to discuss 'fundamental science for climate resilient rice'.

[Registration now closed](#)

AAB Annual General Meeting

16th September 2026, Online

Mark your diaries now, our AGM will be held online at 12.30pm BST on the 16th September. AAB members will be forwarded joining instructions in the coming weeks.

Auxin 2026

4-8th October 2026, Albufeira, Portugal

We are delighted to bring Auxin2026 meeting to the Algarve this Autumn.

[In-person registration now closed](#)

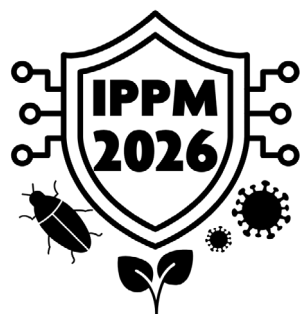


Early Career Essentials for Applied Biologists

20th - 21st October, Nottingham UK

Cultivating careers and creating a community - our ECPro group are hosting their first conference this October, focussing on communication and career development for early career applied biologists. With talks, panel discussions, workshops and plenty of opportunities to network with fellow early career professionals across academia and industry, there's something for everyone - check out the draft programme online now!

[Register now - Abstract deadline 1st September](#)



IPPM26 - Technological Innovation for Integrated Pest, Pathogen and Weed Management

3-4th November, Leicester UK

IPPM26 will be returning to Leicester by popular demand - this year expanding to include weed management alongside pests and pathogens. With an outstanding line-up of invited speakers already confirmed, we encourage you to join us and submit abstracts in 4 broad categories reflecting the journey of bringing IPM technologies from the lab into the field.

[Register now - Abstract deadline 13th September](#)

Sustainable Crop Nutrition - AAB President's Meeting

17-18th November, York UK

Join us as we address global issues in sustainable crop nutrition, bridging fertilizer use, soil health and plant uptake of nutrients essential to human health. The AAB President's Meeting is a biennial celebration of the research interests of the current AAB President - Professor Dale Sanders FRS. The programme will feature talks from submitted abstracts and invited speakers: Tony Miller (John Innes Centre), Stephanie Swarbreck (Niab), Ute Kraemer (University of Bochum) and Tim Mauchline (Rothamsted Research) and award talks from the 2026 AAB President's Medallists.

Register now - Abstract deadline 12th September



Horticulture and Healthy Diets

26th November, Kent UK



In collaboration with the East Malling Trust, the AAB are happy to present this exciting one day event designed to support healthy diets with a thriving UK horticulture sector. Featuring Keynotes from Henry Dimbleby (author of the National Food Strategy) and Prof. Martin Warren (CSO of the Quadram Institute) - the event will feature plenty of opportunities to share your own work. We especially encourage Early-Career Professionals to submit abstracts, if selected to present ECPs will receive free registration!

Register now - Early-bird savings end 1st September

SAVE THE DATE - further details coming soon

Advances in Nematology 2026

10th December 2026, London UK

Monogram 2027

23-25th March 2027, Nottingham UK

International Advances in Plant Virology - IAPV 2027

6-8th April 2027, Cambridge UK

Plant Biology Education II

13-14th April 2027, Cambridge UK

Long Term Experiments 2027

22-24th June 2027, Stellenbosch, South Africa ([find out more](#))

EUCARPIA Leafy Vegetables Conference

12-15th July 2027, Warwick UK ([find out more](#))

Creating Canopies III

31st Aug - 1st September 2027, Shropshire UK

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PLANT BIOLOGY EDUCATION 2

13-14th April 2027, Cambridge UK

Partnerships,
Learning,
Audiences, and
Networks for
Teaching

Building on our Manifesto
for Plant Science Education

Save the Date!

Page | 4

Featuring Keynotes from
Ottoline Leyser & Johnathan Napier

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ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS



Events in our Community

Webinar on short-rotation forestry

12th August, Online

Short rotation forestry is a sustainable practice which can offer significant environmental and benefits including carbon sequestration. In this webinar you'll hear about the latest research into short rotation forestry and gain a better understanding of how the practice can support a low-emissions future.

[Register for free](#)



IPPS9: Phenotyping for All: Bridging the Gap in Global Agriculture

12-16th October, Accra, Ghana

The 9th International Plant Phenotyping Symposium (IPPS9) convenes a global community of scientists and industry partners to confront the challenge of food insecurity in an era of unprecedented global shocks - focusing on the adaptation and deployment of plant phenotyping tools specifically tailored to serve Pan-African research and agriculture.



[Registration closes 1st October](#)

Black in Plant Science (BiPS) Conference 2026

30th October, York UK



BiPS is back for 2026 - this year welcoming Yoselin Benitez-Alfonso (University of Leeds) and a surprise international guest as plenary speakers. Featuring workshops, poster sessions and talks from Research Excellence Award Winners: Sibongile Zimba and Ousmane Dao. As always it promises to be a fantastic day celebrating, cultivating and connecting the UK BiPS community.

[Register now - Early-bird registration rates end 18th September](#)

UK Precision Breeding – Farming Futures Conference

24th September, Norwich UK



Join the John Innes Centre for a one-day conference bringing together farmers, breeders, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders to explore the fast-evolving opportunities of precision breeding in the UK. The programme will examine the journey from research to reality – covering policy and regulation, farmer benefit, on-farm evaluation, routes to market, and the ecosystem needed to support future innovation and growth.

[Register now](#)

CROPADAPT2026

14- 15th October, Ghent, Belgium



The junior scientists at ILVO are excited to invite you to a dynamic, young scientist-led plant symposium that brings together researchers, students, and professionals from across the plant sciences community. The program is structured around two complementary perspectives: immediate resilience, focusing on how plants endure stress today, and future resilience, exploring innovative ways to shape the next generation of crops.

[Register now](#)

Plant Health Visit to Oxford Botanic Garden

15th October, Oxford UK

As part of the Royal Society of Biology's Plant Health Series, this event will feature talks from plant health professionals and a guided tour around Oxford Botanic Garden.

Register & attend for free - waitlist now open

SciFor26: Science & Innovation in Forestry Conference

11-12th November, Edinburgh UK



With adaptation, resilience and productivity as key challenges for those working with Great Britain's trees, woods and forests, the role of long-term scientific research has never been more important. As well as showcasing the vitally important research, the conference will provide a forum for discussion, knowledge exchange and networking between researchers, practitioners and policymakers.

Register now - limited early-bird tickets remaining

New Genomic Techniques for Crop improvement 2027

25-28th January 2027, Valencia, Spain

This international congress on the science, technology and social aspects of New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) for crop improvement will bring together leading experts in genome editing, trait biology, and AI-driven trait discovery to discuss advances in developing high-yielding, better-quality, more resilient, and disease-resistant crops, trees and vegetatively propagated species. NGTs for Crops 2027 provides a forum for researchers, technology developers, breeders, policymakers, regulators, and industry partners to share the latest results and address the scientific, technical, social, and regulatory dimensions of NGTs. Topic-specific sessions and roundtable discussions will offer up-to-date science and perspectives on evolving global and EU regulatory frameworks and their implications for research, innovation, and food systems.



Register now

Plant Biology Europe 2027

17-20th August 2027, Vienna, Austria



Plant Biology Europe 2027 - From Single Cell Multiomics, AI and Modelling to Food Security and Policy - will be hosted in Vienna next summer.

Save the date

Community News

Do you have something to share with our community? Opportunities, jobs, achievements... we'd love to hear about them. Get in touch with the AAB Office!

EU approval for NGT crops

On behalf of our PlantEd specialist group and members of our broader community working on gene-editing technologies in crops, we welcome the news of the European Parliament's final legislative approval, on 17 June 2026, to deregulate plants developed using New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) such as CRISPR-Cas9. By regulating crops on the basis of the genetic change itself rather than the breeding method used, the new law creates a proportionate, science-based pathway that will help researchers across Europe deliver crop varieties that are more climate-resilient, resource-efficient and nutritious - a welcome step forward for sustainable agriculture.

This also brings the EU closer in line with the UK's Precision Breeding Act 2023, which should ease friction for researchers and breeders working across both markets. Here in the UK, our own AAB council member Nigel Halford (Rothamsted Research), as technical lead on Defra's PROBITY project, has recently secured precision bred status for a low-asparagine wheat variety, engineered to cut acrylamide formation during baking and toasting by 59% with no yield penalty. With acrylamide limits also tightening in EU food law, and the 4-year ACRYRED Cost Action project drawing to a close, this is a timely example of the food-safety and public-health gains precision breeding can now deliver at scale on both sides of the Channel.



UK Farming Roadmap 2050

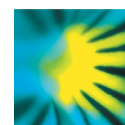
The long-awaited [Farming Roadmap](#) was at last released by Defra in June, setting out the UK government's long-term strategy for delivering farming that is profitable, sustainable and resilient. Whilst the sentiment has been broadly welcomed by members of the farming community and we applaud any plan that puts agricultural sustainability and resilience at its forefront - many are in agreement that the roadmap currently falls short on action and delivery. Interested parties can check-out statements from [NFU](#) and the [NFFN](#) for an overview.

Catch up on RSB's Plant Health Summer Conference

In case you missed the Royal Society of Biology's Plant Health Summer Conference you can now watch the entirety back on their [YouTube channel](#). Featuring Talks from David Guillaume-Schoepfer (Tropic Bioscience), Charles Lane (Fera), Tia Salter (RSB), John Warren and Lauren Daly (Oxford Botanic Gardens) and more.

Feeling the Heat?

Take a break from yet another hot, dry summer and catch up on recorded talks from the 47th New Phytologist Symposium "Extreme Heat: Extending the thermal limits of plant life" - now available to [view for free](#) on-demand.



New
Phytologist

Career Development Opportunities

Plant Physiology Assistant Features Editor (AFE) Program

Plant Physiology is now accepting applications to join the 2-year Plant Physiology Assistant Features Editor (AFE) program, starting January 2027. AFEs support the journal by writing News and Views articles about recently published papers and by hosting Plant Physiology webinars on recent research. You will also be included in efforts to explore ways to make our papers more discoverable and accessible to the public. Find out more and [apply by 8th September](#).

2026-2027 Plantae Fellows Program

Are you a creative and articulate plant scientist looking to connect with other like-minded folks? ASPB need your help to nurture and grow Plantae, their online home for the global plant science community. They are looking for individuals who want to become highly engaged by creating and curating content, facilitating and hosting discussions, and otherwise fostering their growing global community. Find out more and [apply by 31st August](#).



Global South Conference Travel Grant

Biology Open has launched a new grant offering up to £3,000 to early-career researchers based in the Global South, wanting to attend international scientific meetings relating to the broad areas of research covered by the journal. Find out more and [apply by 20th November](#).

Open Fellowship Calls



The [Royal Society University Research Fellowship](#) (URF) programme - supporting the next generation of research leaders to undertake cutting-edge research - and [Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026](#) both close 9th September 2026.

UK Research and Innovation Policy Internships



Opportunity for doctoral students funded by any of the UKRI research councils to work for three months in a policy organisation within UK parliament. Typical placements include production of a POSTnote or POSTbrief, but this unique opportunity to view the epicentre of policy-making from the inside may also include a secondment to a select committee or to the House of Commons or House of Lords Libraries. Find out more & [apply by 8th September](#).



Meeting Report - Parliamentary Links Day

As a member of Royal Society of Biology's Parliamentary Steering Group it was our privilege to send a delegation to the Parliamentary Links Day - 16th June 2026 - bringing together science and politics.

Core to the mission of the AAB is the application of biological research to key challenges around food, energy and environmental security. With recent heatwaves highlighting the climate crisis, it is vital that science and policy work together to harness biological understanding and tackle global challenges.

Parliamentary Links Day is an annual event that brings together the STEM community and Members of Parliament. Organised by the Royal Society of Biology, the Links Day is attended by many learned societies and scientists to share their perspectives with MPs and other attendees.

President of the AAB, Professor Dale Sanders FRS, was joined by Dr Sonja Dunbar (University of Cambridge), Dr Katharine Hubbard (Buckinghamshire New University) and Dr Catherine Mansfield (Imperial College London), forming the Association of Applied Biologists' delegation to the 2026 Parliamentary Links Day. The delegation shares a background in plant science, and on arriving shared views about the importance of plants in providing solutions for the major challenges of today around food, fuel, energy and sustainability, but also acknowledged the often-negative early perceptions school-leavers may have developed of our field.

Dame Chi Onwurah MP, chair of the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee, was the hosting MP, and welcomed delegates with a speech that highlighted her belief in the vital importance of STEM for our country and economy. As an engineer and politician, her driving force in both these domains has been to make society work better for everyone. She emphasised that science has a key role to play in policy-making, and the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee aims to hold the Government to account and feed robust scientific evidence into policy.

The theme of this year's meeting was "University financial sustainability: challenges and opportunities in higher education and research funding".

Sonja got the chance to advocate for discovery research funding and discuss the potential of plant science research with Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner and others at the event. Their discussion acknowledged the importance of translating discoveries into applications in the field and in society, but also the vital pipeline of discovery research that provides the ideas that might have future applications – both are necessary to drive innovation, and finding the right balance is key.

The keynote address, delivered by Hannah Russell, CEO of the British Science Association, highlighted findings of the [2025 public attitudes to science survey](#). She noted that while trust in science remains generally high, it has fallen among some demographics, notably 16–24-year-olds and women. There has also been a decrease in the proportion of people feeling well informed and that the science they hear is 'generally true', correlating with social media becoming as commonly used as traditional media for how the public acquires information.

Despite this, the majority of the public still think that science is a national asset and feel it increases prosperity for the country. However, responses note that most people feel they see less impact personally, and there is a general perception that science helps the rich more than the poor.

Of note to higher education institutions, nearly a third of young people agreed that school had put them off science, an increase from previous years, and this demographic were slightly more likely to disagree that jobs in science were interesting – raising concerns for the pipeline of future scientists and the perceptions of the future voting population. Hannah highlighted that this is heavily tied to the funding challenges facing research at present, as public perception of science as valuable for society is tied to whether funding for science is considered a priority, especially when weighed against other things within a limited pot. In closing, Hannah asked us all to consider science outreach as an essential, not a nice-to-have, to ensure we have a voting population that feels well-informed and positive about science.

Following talks, delegates moved to a networking lunch. In conversations with delegates from the Genetics Society, Catherine discussed the importance of learned society-funded studentships in supporting student research placements and allowing students to feel part of a scientific community early in their careers. In discussions with the British Ecological Society, Catherine and Sonja explored the role of learned societies in supporting early career scientists who are on a teaching focused track. We acknowledged that historically the main offer has often focused on early career researchers, but with an increasing number of teaching and scholarship pathways being recognised, there is an opportunity to ensure learned societies offer support for career development and networking among educators too. As an example of forming strong, motivated networks, we took the chance to promote the second Plant Biology Education meeting taking place in April 2027. Both this meeting and its predecessor have been made possible through the support of the AAB. They have been key in bringing together the plant science education community across the UK with the first resulting in a manifesto for plant science education, and the second looking to implement themes around partnerships and networks within and beyond academia – a theme whose importance was reinforced by conversations at this Links Day.

We came away from the day with a renewed sense of the importance of good science communication in an increasingly noisy media landscape, of the vital role of connecting with others within and beyond academia, and a duty to ensure our students graduate not only with increased knowledge about science, but the skills to make them good global citizens and advocates for the impact and importance of science.

We thank the AAB for selecting and supporting the delegation, the RSB and Dame Chi for organising and hosting the event and the attendees we spoke to for stimulating discussions.



The AAB delegation at Parliamentary Links Day 2026. Left to right: K. Hubbard, S. Dunbar, C. Mansfield & D. Sanders. PC:RSB.



ACRYRED

Meeting Report - Acrylamide in Cereal Products: Progress and Prospects

We were pleased to host the final meeting of the ACRYRED COST Action (CA21149) in Palermo Sicily, 3rd-4th June. A truly stunning location to bring together researchers, industry experts and policy organisations to discuss the culmination of work from across the past 4 years of the ACRYRED project and future perspectives on acrylamide mitigation in cereal products. Here's what our Early-Career Travel Awardee had to say...

Michela Quiquero
University of Molise, Italy
michela.quiquero@unimol.it

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to engage with the latest developments in the field of acrylamide in cereal products, starting from reaction mechanisms associated with its formation in cereals to its evolution during processing and the effects on global health, as well as techniques for acrylamide detection. The most important valuable highlights were attending presentations by leading researchers in the field, which offered insights into emerging trends, innovative methodologies, and ongoing challenges within the discipline, especially regarding the need of legislative updates.

Several talks were particularly relevant to my own research interests and helped me identify new perspectives and potential directions for future work. Professor Vural Gokmen, in particular, exploited mechanisms of acrylamide formation, mechanisms and reactions, whereas Dr. Colm Campion offers an industry perspective and a real example of acrylamide monitoring and its challenges. In session 4 Professor Federica Gilardi poses evidences on health risks and uncertainty associated with acrylamide intake focusing on the importance of risk assessment of the contaminants in diet, taking into consideration recent updates of legislation and underlining the importance of the effects of research on public health. The second highlight was the opportunity to present a poster with the research carried out during my PhD with members of the international scientific community: this offers me the opportunity for discussion and professional growth.

“Bringing my work to such a high-level conference and comparing it at an international level with the top experts was a source of growth and pride.”

From a personal point of view, the meeting was an enriching experience. The most useful aspect was the opportunity to interact for the first time directly with researchers whose work I have followed through my PhD. These discussions provided insights that are difficult to obtain through written communication alone and helped me better understand current priorities and emerging questions within the research community.

Another valuable aspect was the interdisciplinary nature of the meeting. Exposure to approaches and perspectives



Hotel Splendid La Torre - a stunning location for ACRYRED 2026

from related fields encouraged me to think more broadly about my own research and highlighted opportunities for applying methods and concepts beyond my immediate area of expertise. In the acrylamide context, numerous studies have been carried out on the agronomic and genetic field, that would represent the first approach to reduce the acrylamide precursors in cereal kernel, especially wheat. The central part of most of the oral presentations was the effects of processing on acrylamide formation; this conference represents the opportunity to focus on work carried out during the 4 years of members of Cost Action, posing the emphasis on the future directions.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Association of Applied Biologists, the conference organisers, for providing the financial support that enabled my participation in this conference. Without this assistance, attending the meeting would have been considerably more difficult. Finally, I am grateful to the speakers, session chairs, and fellow participants whose presentations, discussions, and feedback contributed substantially to the value of this experience and made the meeting especially worthwhile.

Check out the ACRYRED website for further perspectives, photos and presentations from the event:
<https://acryred.eu/news/acrylamide-in-cereal-products-progress-and-prospect/>

Association of Applied Biologists' ECPro group presents...

Early Career Essentials for Applied Biologists

Cultivating careers & creating a community!

20th – 21st October 2026
University of Nottingham

Featuring keynotes, workshops,
opportunities to present your
work and network across
academia & industry

aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

Register now!

Abstract submission
closes 1st September



cvent.me/8o1kkP



Meeting Reports - International Conference on Photosynthesis Research 2026

We were delighted to host ICPR26 on behalf of the International Society of Photosynthesis Research on 26th- 30th July, bringing together 750 researchers from around the world for the main ICPR event in Liverpool and its satellite meetings across the UK. With an absolutely packed programme there's slots to report, so let's pass over to the first of our early-career travel awardees...

Edward Chaplin
University of Sydney, Australia
Edward.chaplin@sydney.edu.au

One of the key highlights of attending ICPR 2026 was the opportunity to present my research during the “Stomata: The Gatekeepers of Photosynthesis” session. Presenting to an international audience of leading plant scientists and crop researchers was both rewarding and professionally significant. The presentation provided an excellent opportunity to showcase findings from my PhD research and receive valuable feedback from experts working across a range of disciplines related to crop physiology, photosynthesis and plant adaptation to environmental stress. As the culmination of approximately three years of doctoral research, it was particularly satisfying to share this work with such a highly engaged scientific community.

“ICPR 2026 provided an invaluable opportunity to engage with the global crop science community and gain a broader perspective on current challenges and opportunities in plant and agricultural research.”



One aspect that I found particularly useful was the ability to discuss my research directly with experts whose work has influenced my own studies. The feedback and discussions generated during and after my presentation provided new ideas for interpreting results, communicating findings and identifying future research directions.

Another highlight was the breadth and quality of the scientific programme. The conference brought together researchers from around the world working on topics spanning crop improvement, phenotyping, plant-environment interactions and productivity in the face of an increasingly challenging climate. Exposure to new methodologies, emerging technologies and innovative research directions provided valuable insights that will help inform my future research and professional development.

The meeting also highlighted the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of crop research, with advances being driven through collaboration between physiologists, geneticists, breeders, modellers and data scientists. Seeing these diverse approaches brought together reinforced the importance of collaborative research in addressing global challenges relating to food security, climate resilience and sustainable agriculture.

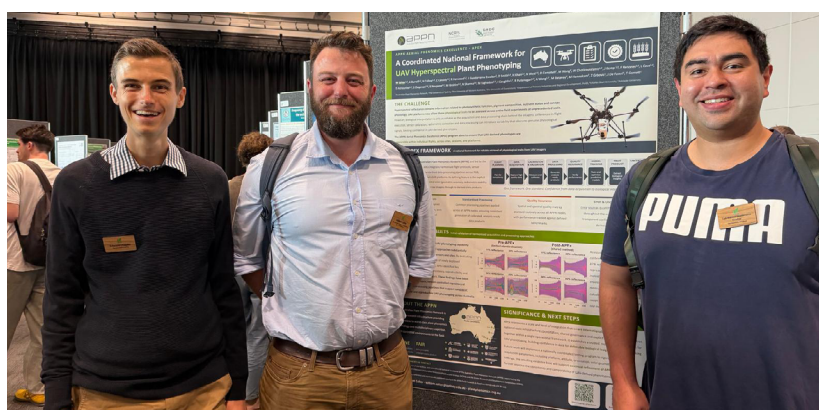
One challenge, albeit a positive one, was selecting which sessions to attend from an exceptionally strong and diverse programme. However, this reflected the high quality of the conference and ensured there were continuous opportunities for learning and engagement throughout the meeting. Through the networking opportunities available throughout the meeting, I was able to connect with researchers from a range of institutions globally, discuss common scientific interests and explore opportunities for future collaboration together. These interactions helped broaden my professional network and created potential avenues for future research partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for providing the travel bursary that made my attendance at ICPR 2026 possible. The support significantly reduced the financial barriers associated with international conference participation and enabled me to present my research to a global audience.

I would also like to thank the conference organisers for delivering an outstanding scientific programme and creating a welcoming environment that facilitated discussion, networking and collaboration. I am also very grateful to my PhD supervisors, in particular Dr William Salter, collaborators and colleagues from the University of Sydney, Australian National University and Australian Plant Phenomics Network (APPN) for their ongoing guidance and support throughout my doctoral studies. Their contributions have been instrumental in the research presented at the conference and in making this experience both professionally valuable and personally rewarding.

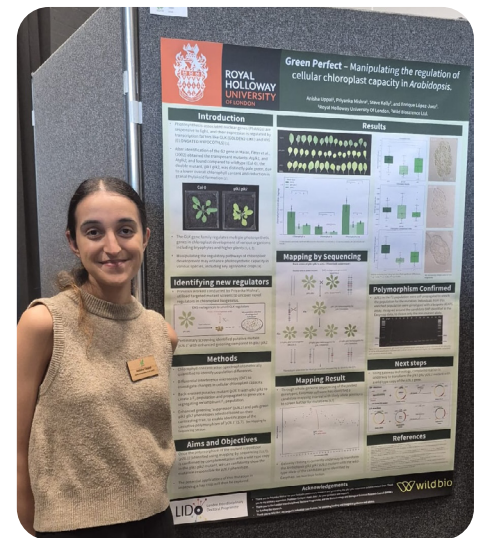
Finally, I would also like to extend my thanks to the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), Center for International Wheat and Maize Improvement (CIMMYT) and School of Life and Environmental Science (SOLES) at the University of Sydney for their financial support through my candidature.



Edward presenting his research in the main auditorium (TL), with colleagues from the University of Sydney during the poster session (BL) and outside our fantastic venue (R).

Anisha Uppal
Royal Holloway, University of London, UK
pnba238@live.rhul.ac.uk

The international nature of ICPR provided the rare opportunity for photosynthesis research from many disciplines to network in a single location, facilitating conversations with individuals that you would unlikely connect with otherwise. I met early career researchers from Melbourne in Australia, from Madison, Wisconsin in the USA, and from many UK-based universities. Connecting with fellow PhD students and sharing our insights and experiences was a valuable opportunity to learn from each other, gain insight into diverse academic experiences, and connect professionally for future collaborations, (whether that may be something as simple as sharing laboratory protocols!).



Anisha presenting her poster at ICPR26

I also managed to network with individuals who work at the industry partner hosting my 3-month internship, which is a requirement of my doctoral training programme. These conversations allowed me to establish connections before my internship begins, gain insight into the company's work and culture, and discuss how I can best prepare for the experience. Moreover, colleagues from my industry partner presented the research they are actively involved in, which considerably helped me consider my future potential career development.

Another highlight was the opportunity to present my research on chloroplast biogenesis in a poster session to a multi-disciplinary audience, which facilitated conversations that provided insight and perspective of how my work could be applicable beyond my current research objectives. For example, my research is focused on cellular development and whole-plant phenotype, and I spoke to an individual who specialises in canopy photosynthesis, which looks at entire plant communities. Their questions and suggestions offered ideas I had not previously considered and highlighted the value of interdisciplinary discussion. I also had the opportunity to speak with a scientific editor who provided valuable feedback on my research, and I realised there were areas I could strengthen my understanding of the broader literature. They also suggested several ideas for future experiments, and the additional work that could be done to help develop my project to a publishable paper. This conversation was incredibly valuable as it gave practical guidance that will help shape the next stages of my research.

A conference session dedicated specifically to my research area was also a particular highlight. Hearing presentations from leading researchers provided insight into the latest developments in the field and exposed me to a range of experimental approaches and perspectives. It was reassuring to see that many researchers encounter similar challenges in their work, reinforcing that these are common aspects of conducting research rather than isolated issues. I also identified several connections between their research and my own project, which gave me new ideas for interpreting my results and considering future direction.

The conference offered a wide range of concurrent talks covering diverse aspects of photosynthesis, from molecular and structural biology to computational modelling, biotechnology, and synthetic biology. Attending these sessions highlighted the inherently multidisciplinary nature of photosynthesis research and demonstrated that advancing our understanding of the field requires a holistic approach.

“Seeing how discoveries at different biological scales and across different disciplines complement one another gave me a broader perspective on my own research and reinforced the importance of considering how individual projects contribute to the wider scientific landscape.”

I attended alongside my supervisor, but as the only early-career researcher from my lab, I found networking initially quite difficult especially given that many large lab groups attended who were happy to speak amongst themselves.

Whilst this was challenging, it forced me to take the initiative and proactively introduce myself and engage with other attendees and proved to be the most valuable insight I gained from attending ICPR 2026.

Overall, I personally found this experience demonstrated the value of attending the conference beyond the technical sessions and the grant enabled me to build meaningful professional relationships that will support my transition into my internship and contribute to my future career development. I encourage others to students to apply for this grant, as I believe others would gain similarly valuable experiences from attending.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I need to thank and acknowledge my supervisor and home institution, Professor Enrique López-Juez at Royal Holloway, University of London. I feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of an institute that encourages conference attendance to present our research as early-career researchers and strengthen our network connections. Thank you to my supervisor, Professor Enrique López-Juez, who always encourages and supports me with every endeavour of my research and professional development. And finally, thank you to the association of applied biologists who helped allow my visit possible, and especially Dr Geraint Parry for organising such a fantastic conference.

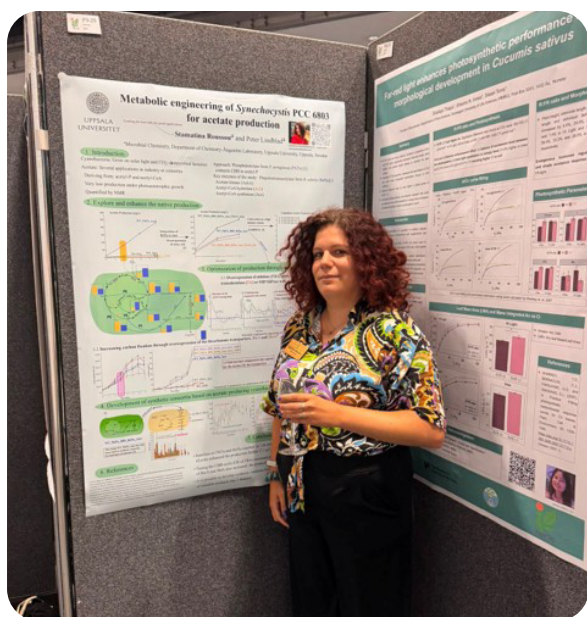
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I really enjoyed the engineering photosynthesis session as it was very close to my personal interests. I have worked with the CBB cycle on cyanobacteria doing my PhD, and it was very nice to listen to similar talks and connect with a broader field of my research, including for example the engineering on plants. Something else I really enjoyed during the meeting was the more “fundamental research” talks, like the evolutionary pattern for membranes development or the far-red photosynthesis. Since my PhD was on metabolic engineering I do not read so much about evolution for example. However, by education I am a biologist so I was very happy I got to listen about fundamental biology again!

Adrian Burcalot's talk was also very inspiring, I really liked that he also got personal and discuss his change of career with the aim of becoming a biologist. I found it very inspiring, especially thinking his success. I also like his approach about holistic photosynthesis, aligns with my personal view on the topic.



Stamatina presenting her poster at ICPR26

From a personal perspective also, this conference was very vital for my networking. I have been awarded a JSPS conference to do 1 year postdoc at the Kobe University and I had the opportunity to interact with group members from this lab and feel more secure about my decision of accepting this scholarship. I also went for dinner with members of groups that I find interesting for my next career steps. Finally, I got to meet a PI from a group that I would be very interested to pursue a 2-year postdoc after my year in Japan. During my poster presentation time I got to talk with a lot of people about my research, especially now that my PhD is done and it is a complete story. I felt also very confident as a scientist as early career PhD students (on their 1st or 2nd year) came to my poster and ask question and my opinion about their lab problems.

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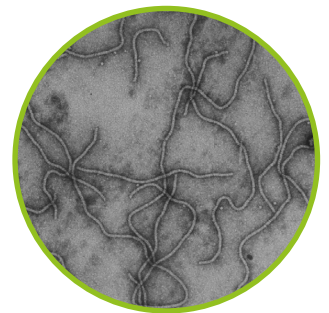
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