



... Celebration

We're celebrating the outstanding achievements of our 2026 President's Medallists - as nominated by you! Find out who they are, and why they deserve these prestigious new awards on page 2.



... Conferences

This issue is packed to the rafters with all the latest from our most recent conferences. Hear more about last month's International Symposium of Rice Functional Genomics at the Royal Society on page 3. And flick through 15(!) early-career meeting reports from recent events: ISRFG 2026, Photosynthesis 2026 and ACRYRED 2026.



... Members Voice

Our society is all about you! In last month's AGM you voted on the next President-Elect, we're delighted to introduce her on page 3!

We're also finally launching our new members' platform this month - incorporating feedback from our 2025 members survey. Find out more on what to expect also on page 3.

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AAB News

September was a whirlwind of AAB activity: with a major international conference, our AGM, two webinars, awards committee meetings and lots more in the planning for the coming months. Read all the latest news here!

Announcing the 2026 AAB President's Medallists

This month, we're absolutely delighted to announce the 2026 AAB President's Medallists! Celebrating excellence, impact and leadership across applied biology, our 2026 Medallists were nominated by members of our global community and appointed by a highly competitive judging process. With so many fantastic nominations across the three categories, our panellists truly had their work cut out, so we'd like to take a moment to applaud the achievements of all those who applied. And now a drum-roll please for our inaugural medallists...

The inaugural Accessibility in Applied Biology Medal is awarded to Professor Yoselin Benitez-Alfonso (University of Leeds) for promotion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the Applied Biology Community. Yoselin's work in establishing the Black in Plant Science UK Network has created sustainable structures that address barriers to participation, visibility and career progression for Black researchers. We are truly honoured to award this medal to Yoselin for her ongoing commitments to promoting inclusivity and career development opportunities across the applied biology community.

Next- celebrating research excellence among emerging researchers in applied plant biology- the first AAB Plant Sciences Medal is awarded to Dr Jonathan Atkinson (University of Nottingham). Jonathan's work on how crop roots respond to soil, and development of research infrastructure, phenotyping tools and open-source software is enabling researchers around the world to develop resilient crops for a changing climate.

Finally the AAB Sustainable Futures Medal, for excellence in implementation or development of sustainable practices in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and land management, is awarded to Dr Noam Chayut (John Innes Centre). Noam's work has transformed the JIC Germplasm Resources Unit from a national service into an international research genebank: growing the centre's capability to support international research and global crop improvement.

A huge congratulations to our three winners - I hope you will all join us in celebrating these outstanding achievements! Our 2026 medallists will receive their awards from AAB President Prof. Dale Sanders FRS at the AAB President's Meeting in York on the 17th November. All members of the community are invited to attend the 2026 Award Talks in York or online. Whether you join us for free access to the awards ceremony, or full-access to the wider conference on Sustainable Crop Nutrition, we'd love to see as many of you there as possible! Find out how to register in our upcoming events from page 4.



Julie Gray elected President-Elect

Continuing with the presidential news: we're pleased to confirm that, from unanimous vote at last month's AGM, our next President-Elect will be Professor Julie Gray. Julie is Professor of Plant Cell Signalling at the University of Sheffield and founded the University's Institute for Sustainable Food. Her research on how plants control the opening and closing of stomata has helped to develop crops with greater drought tolerance and water-use efficiency. We're sure that Julie will be an excellent driver of AAB's mission to cultivate a global research community advancing applied biology for sustainable agriculture, resilient food systems and a healthier environment. Julie will be taking up AAB office from January as our current President-Elect Prof. Martin Parry steps into the role of President. She will work alongside Martin and the Council, and then succeed to the Presidency at the end of Martin's term in 2029.



Rice Science at the Royal Society

Last month we hosted the International Symposium on Rice Functional Genomics (ISRFG) 2026 at the Royal Society on behalf of OryzaNet - a new BBSRC-funded network supporting international collaboration and training in rice research. As a truly international event, we were thrilled to be able to bring together 180 delegates from around the world in London. This was thanks in large part to generous funding from the Global Methane Hub, which supported more delegates than ever before from LMICs, alongside our regular AAB early-career travel grants.

It was truly a week of excellent science in a spectacular setting; we took over the Wellcome Trust Lecture Theatre and both Wolfson Suites for the concurrent sessions and the posters alone spread across three rooms of the ground floor, with the largest poster session the Royal Society has seen in recent years! So a big congratulations are in order for



ISRFG 2026 delegates supported by generous travel grants from the Global Methane Hub.

the early-career poster prize winners: Aishwarya Shankhapal, Joram Dongus, Isabel Bojanini, Maurizio Di Marzo and Gopal Misra.

Thank you everyone who joined us in London to share their science and vision for the future, and of course a big thank you as always to our sponsors: Global Methane Hub, The New Phytologist Foundation, Plant Biotechnology Journal, LGC, Journal of Experimental Botany, Unigro, Arizona Genomics Institute and PhytoAB. If you'd like to experience a bit of the conference magic, you can find the [ISRFG 2026 conference reel](#) over on our YouTube & Instagram channels, and read the first set of our early-career travel reports from page 10.

Brand-new AAB Members Platform

It's been a long-time coming but our brand-new members platform is FINALLY launching this month. Members can expect an email in your inboxes over the next week or so inviting you to log-in to the new AAB-VeryConnect site to complete your profile. We hope this will make everyone's lives a little easier when it comes to managing memberships, events bookings and communications preferences (as well as bringing some brand-new community features including a members' directory, resources and opportunities board!) But please don't hesitate to reach out to Jordan (jordan@aab.org.uk) with any feedback or issues!

AAB Webinar Series

Finally, in case you missed them, we hosted two(!) webinars last month. Watch back of our webinars "[all aabout PlantEd](#)" and "[all aabout Nematology](#)" over on our YouTube channel now. Don't miss upcoming webinars in the next couple of months on Virology and PlantEd - find out more from page 4 - and watch this space for more details on an interactive careers online workshop from our ECPro group coming the end of November!



Upcoming AAB Events

Early Career Essentials for Applied Biologists

20th - 21st October, Nottingham UK & Online

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 full programme online now!

Register now - email Jordan/ Geraint ASAP if you'd still like to attend in person



Webinar 'all aabout' Virology

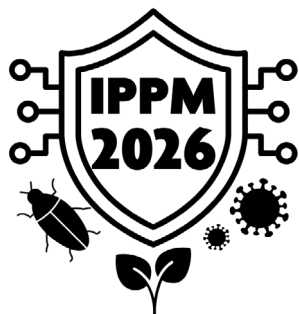
27th October, 2pm BST

The next webinar in our series all 'aabout' plant science and sustainable agriculture comes from our Virology specialist group, featuring a keynote from Svetlana Folimonova (University of Florida), early career talk from Hana Azuma (University of Cambridge) and Annals paper highlight from Esperanza Gea Caballero (CEBAS-CSIC).

Register for free

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

3-4th November, Leicester UK & Online



Our annual IPPM conference is back - this year officially including weed management alongside pests and pathogens for the first time. With an outstanding set of invited speakers already confirmed across sessions on Prevention (Rachel Wells), Detection and Decision Support (David Comont, Sacha White), On-Farm Application of Biocontrol (Lottie Alves, Georgie Bray), Control (Ben Magri), Integration (Mark Ramsden) and Panel discussions on Integration of IPM strategies across Agricultural Systems.

Register now - Poster abstract deadline 20th October

Webinar 'all aabout' PlantEd

10th November, 2pm BST

The next webinar in our series all 'aabout' plant genome editing features talks from Sotirios Fragkostefanakis (University of Frankfurt) and Eliza Loo (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf).

Register for free



Sustainable Crop Nutrition - AAB President's Meeting

17-18th November, York UK & Online

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 Prof. Dale Sanders FRS. Featuring talks from 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 28th October**



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) - our full programme is now online!

Register now - Registration closes 12th November

Advances in Nematology 2026

10th December, London UK & Online

Our Annual Advances in Nematology is back, once again you are invited to join us at the prestigious Linnean Society, London, and online as we share all the latest in the Nematology field. We are delighted to confirm this year's invited speakers: Mark Blaxter (Wellcome Sanger Institute), Andre Bertran (Wageningen University) and Giulia Torrini (CREA)- plus plenty of talks & posters from submitted abstracts.

Register now - Abstract deadline 30th October

Monogram 2027

23-25th March 2027, Nottingham UK & Online

We're delighted to be yet again hosting the annual UK cereals research conference on behalf of the Monogram Network. With speaker announcements to be released later this month, watch this space! Join us next March: check out our sessions & submit your abstracts now!

Register now



SAVE THE DATE - further details coming soon



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, SA ([find out more](#))

EUCARPIA Leafy Vegetables

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

Creating Canopies III

31st Aug - 1st September 2027, Shropshire UK

PlantED Conference 2027

28-30th September 2027, Norwich UK



LONG TERM EXPERIMENTS 2027



SAVE THE DATE!
22 - 24 JUNE 2027



STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY &
LANGGEWENS RESEARCH FARM,
SOUTH AFRICA



Events in our Community

Global Plant Council x Plant Biotechnology Journal Webinar: Plants as biofactories for the production of insect pheromones

13th October, Online

Join the 3rd webinar in GPC's series with Plant Biotechnology Journal (co-owned by the AAB) to explore how plants can be engineered into green factories for insect pheromones. Learn how plant metabolic engineering could make pheromone-based pest management cheaper, greener and more accessible, and to hear what's next for this emerging field, featuring talks from Olivier Van Aken and Abraham Cisneros-Ontiveros (Lund University). **Register for free**

2026 Arabidopsis Community Impact Awards

27th October, Online

Join the North American Arabidopsis Steering Committee (NAASC) for a webinar celebrating community members committed to supporting the Arabidopsis community and making positive impacts on it through one or more approaches including outreach, service, communication, mentoring, and/or advocacy. The 2026 award talks will be delivered by Sterling Field (BASF & Michigan State), Yoselin Benitez-Alfonso (Leeds) and Mary Williams (ASPB). **Register now**



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, UK) and Tessa Burch-Smith (Danforth Center, USA) as plenary speakers. Featuring workshops, poster sessions and talks from Research Excellence Award Winners: Sibongile Zimba and Ousmane Dao. It promises to be a fantastic day celebrating, cultivating and connecting the UK BiPS community.

Registration closes 16th October

Genotype x Environment x Management (GxExM) Symposium IV

5- 6th November, Brisbane, Australia & Online

GxExM Symposium IV will bring together researchers, industry representatives, breeders, agronomists, modellers and agricultural innovators to explore the critical role of GxExM interactions in crop improvement. Examining new approaches and emerging insights to support future crop improvement strategies and connect genetics, agronomy, environmental understanding and on-farm outcomes.

Register now- its free to attend!

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



BCPC PESTS & BENEFICIALS REVIEW

24th November, Warwick UK

Join the British Crop Production Council as they focus on the opportunities arising from the UK–EU SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) reset for pest and beneficial management in UK agriculture.

[Register now](#)

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.

[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](#)

PlantEd CONFERENCE 2027

What the EU can learn
from the UK's approach to
deregulating NGT plants
and in-field testing

 **28-30 SEPTEMBER 2027**
JOHN INNES CENTRE, NORWICH UK

Save the Date!

Join us as we discuss lessons for the EU deregulation of
New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) from the UK's
Precision Breeding Act & ongoing field trials.

Speaker announcements coming soon!

Expect scientists & breeders from across Europe and
the UK with Keynotes & Panel Discussions

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!

aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

Featuring Keynotes from
Ottoline Leyser & Johnathan Napier



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!

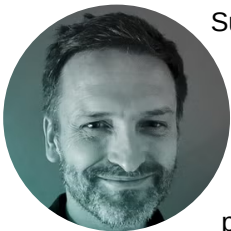
Plant Health & Food Security in UK Parliament

Last month the House of Commons hosted a debate on the draft Plant Health, Seeds, Seed Potatoes and Plant Propagating Material (Amendment) for Northern Ireland, you can watch this back [here](#). Defra also published their report on 'Resilience of the food supply chain to disruptions', outlining the key risks and Defra's current actions to improve resilience. You can read it in full online [here](#).



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Sustainable Crop Production in the Climate 100 list



Sustainable agriculture features high on the list in the [Independent Climate 100 List 2026](#) published last month. With friend of the AAB - and one of the organisers of last month's ISRFG conference - Prof Erik Murchie (University of Nottingham) claiming a spot on the list for the fantastic work he and his collaborators have been doing in developing drought resistant rice varieties. Also catch spotlights in the Food & Agriculture Section on some of the incredible people leading the way in public awareness & adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. Check out the full list online now!

Career Development Opportunities

The Royal Society Career Development Fellowship



The Career Development Fellowship (CDF) is a four-year, postdoctoral research fellowship that aims to support the retention in STEM of researchers from underrepresented backgrounds. Fellowships will provide funding to conduct high-quality research and a comprehensive programme of mentoring, training and networking opportunities to support award holders in establishing a successful research career in the UK. Find out more and [apply by 18th November](#).

Apply for the New Phytologist Tansley Medal



New
Phytologist

The New Phytologist Tansley Medal is awarded annually in recognition of an outstanding contribution to research in plant science by an individual with three to five years' experience since gaining / defending their PhD. Short-listed candidates are invited to author a Tansley insight review for publication in New Phytologist and the winner(s) receives a prize of £2,000 (GBP). [Applications close 1st November](#).



PhD Industry Placement with Dyson Farming

Applications are open for a 3-month PhD industry placement with the Research team at Dyson Farming - with a preferred start date of March or June 2027 to coincide with the peak field work season and strawberry trial work, so there would be opportunities for the student to be involved in a variety of different research. [Find out more.](#)

PhD project: Circular DNA's a novel method of plant evolution

Prospective PhD students are welcome to apply for this project investigating a novel strategy of plant evolution at the University of Kent - laying the basis for new crop improvement technologies. [Apply by 23rd October](#) or contact h.cockerton@kent.ac.uk

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](#).



Apply now for RSB's Plant Health Professional Development Award

The Plant Health Professional Development Award is designed to support ambitious individuals working in plant health by offering a free route to official certification and career support. Up to 30 awards are available for the 2026-27 application period. Recipients of the award will receive free membership to the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) for one year, and a free application to the Plant Health Professional Register (PHPR) which includes registration for the first year. Find out more and [apply by 1st December](#).



Join the AAB and Global Plant Council at COP31

As part of the Global Plant Council, we're offering AAB members the chance to access the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) this November. On this year's action agenda are a whole host of topics which will effect our wider applied biology community: from Zero Waste & Methane Reduction to Food Security to Youth & Education. If you'd like to join the GPC online delegation please contact Geraint (geraint@aab.org.uk) as soon as possible.



Meeting Reports - International Symposium on Rice Functional Genomics 2026

Last month we were delighted to host ISRFG 2026 on behalf of OryzaNet at The Royal Society, with researchers joining us in London from all over the world to discuss fundamental science for climate resilient rice. As always we were pleased to be able to support the attendance of a huge number of early-career researchers through our travel grants - here's what the first of our awardees thought of the event!

Syed Adeel Zafar

University of California, Riverside, USA

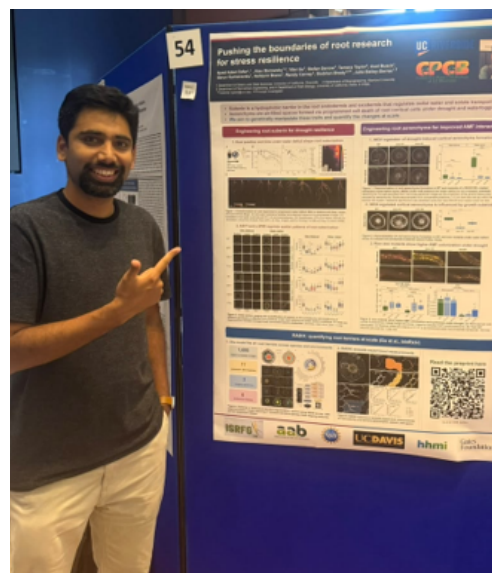
syedz@ucr.edu

One of the most valuable aspects of the meeting was the diversity of participants, covering almost all areas of rice research from breeding and genetics to physiology and genomics. This created a highly stimulating environment for exchanging ideas and learning about rice research from a wide range of perspectives. Both the coffee breaks and poster sessions provided an excellent opportunity for direct, in-person interaction with other researchers. The atmosphere was very friendly and collaborative, and people were genuinely open to sharing their work, experiences, and suggestions. For me, this is one of the most rewarding aspects of the scientific community. At the same time, I felt that the poster session could have been even more effective if it had been scheduled earlier in the day, when participants had more energy and time for discussion.

Another important perspective I gained from the meeting was a stronger appreciation of the challenge posed by methane emissions from paddy rice cultivation. Several presentations highlighted the environmental impact associated with flooded rice production and the need to develop strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining productivity. It was encouraging to see how many rice researchers from different parts of the world are approaching this challenge from diverse perspectives, including genetics, physiology, agronomy, and microbiome research. The meeting provided a great platform for interdisciplinary collaboration for developing more sustainable and climate-resilient rice production.

Adeel's Meeting Highlights

One of the main highlights of ISRFG 2026 was the opportunity to present my poster to early-career rice researchers as well as established experts



Adeel presenting his poster at ISRFG 2026.

in the field. The poster session provided a great opportunity to receive constructive feedback from researchers with different areas of expertise.

A second major highlight was the opportunity to interact directly with the OryzaNet leadership, to discuss the opportunity to develop a US-UK collaborative project for the recently announced OryzaNet Rice Research, Communication and Innovation Grants. The OryzaNet platform supports projects that strengthen the UK rice research community and encourages global collaborative engagement, with awards of up to £10,000. Importantly, I was also able to identify a potential UK collaborator with complementary expertise, providing a foundation for developing a joint proposal.

My third highlight was having the opportunity for an open and detailed in-person discussions with leading researchers whose expertise is directly relevant to my current projects. I was able to discuss my current research with Amelia Henry from CIRAD, and Professor Uta Paszkowski, a renowned root-microbe expert from Cambridge University. These discussions provided useful scientific perspectives and ideas that I can incorporate into the next stages of my research.

Acknowledgments

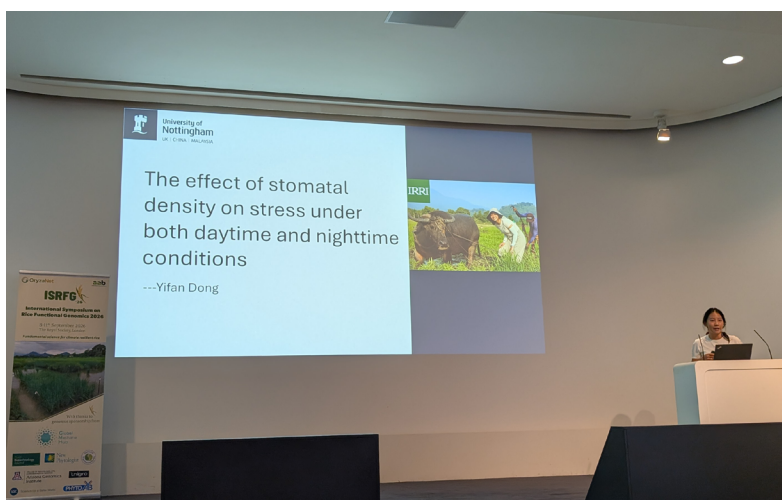
I am very grateful to the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for providing me with a Travel Grant to support my attendance at ISRFG 2026. This financial support helped make my participation possible and allowed me to present my research to the international rice research community. I would also like to thank Geraint Parry for showing the flexibility in registration due to visa delay and his extraordinary guidance during the visa application process.

Yifan Dong
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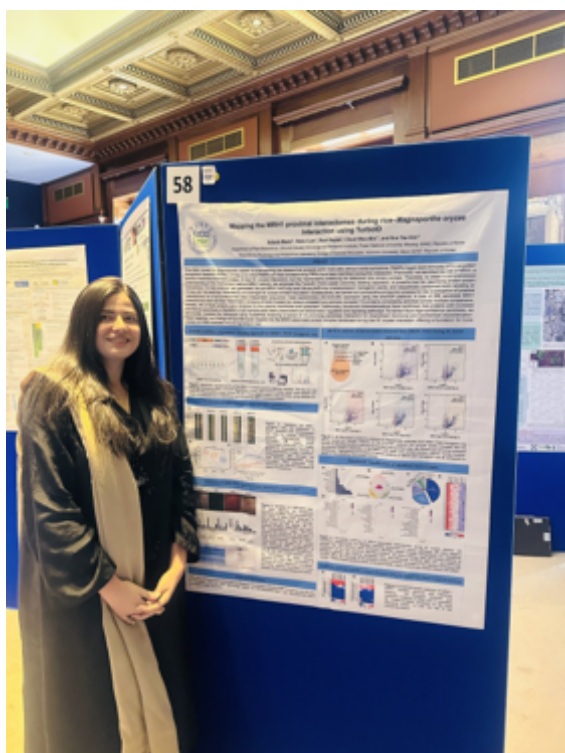
I would like to highlight two things from this meeting: first, it was my first experience giving a presentation; second, I had the opportunity to build connections with both new and familiar people. Being able to present in front of an audience of experts gave me the wonderful opportunity to introduce myself and my interests. As an early-career researcher, I really appreciate ISRFG giving me this chance and platform to build my confidence and grow professionally. In addition, the conference also offered talks from different fields and researchers from all over the world. Some of the work was inspiring and eye-opening, and it was wonderful to learn what others are working on. I was able to encounter and chatted with researchers from CIRAD, and Huazhong Agricultural University that works in a similar direction as I do. This brings me to my second point: I met both new and familiar researchers, which allowed me to build new connections and strengthen existing ones. In the past, I have attended to training courses at IRRI, it brought me joy to see old faces and reminisce the old memories and see how we have developed and grown since last time we met.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Erik Murchie who supported me to go to the conference, and I would also like to show my appreciation to OryzaNet and the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for providing all the help and information about the event.



Yifan delivering her first ever presentation at a conference in the Wellcome Trust Lecture Hall at the Royal Society.



Beyond the science, what struck me most about ISRFG26 was how friendly and open the atmosphere was throughout. Despite being a large international meeting bringing together researchers from every major rice-growing region, it never felt intimidating, and I had many good, informal conversations with people working on rice from all over the world between sessions and over coffee. Being hosted in the Royal Society's historic rooms, surrounded by centuries of scientific history while discussing the newest genomics and proteomics tools, gave the whole meeting a real sense of occasion.

I had the huge honour of presenting my poster, "Mapping the MRH1 proximal interactomes during rice–*Magnaporthe oryzae* interaction using TurboID", describing work from our lab using TurboID-based proximity labelling to map proteins that interact with the plasma membrane protein MRH1 during rice blast infection.

"Standing beside my poster and walking researchers from around the world through the proteomic workflow and candidate interactors was genuinely one of the highlights of my career so far."

My second highlight of the conference was a talk on FungiDB and AI-driven annotation for rice and its pathogens. Professor Andy Jones (University of Liverpool, UK) gave a fantastic talk, "AI-driven genome annotation and functional genomic analyses for rice and rice pathogens". He discussed on how FungiDB, a part of the VEuPathDB Bioinformatics Resource Center, is used to curate and annotate proteins from rice pathogens such as *Magnaporthe oryzae*, including new AI tools that summarise what the literature says about a given gene. He also outlined plans to extend the same infrastructure to *Oryza sativa* itself, including host gene-expression datasets collected during pathogen infection. As someone who generates large proteomics datasets, seeing how this kind of shared, AI-assisted annotation is built into a live platform was extremely useful, and it gave me a much clearer idea of how to make our own interactome data more discoverable for the wider rice community.

Dr Shalabh Dixit (IRRI, The Philippines), who leads IRRI's Direct-Seeded and Upland Rice breeding programme, gave a great talk, "A Genomic Engine for Low-Methane, Direct-Seeded Rice: Precision Phenotyping, Mid-Density Genotyping and a One-Year Breeding Cycle". He described how combining precision phenotyping with mid-density genotyping has allowed IRRI to compress its breeding cycle down to a single year, with the specific goal of developing direct-seeded varieties that also produce less methane. It was a great example of genomics, phenotyping and breeding being brought together into a single pipeline, and a good reminder that pathogen-interaction work like mine ultimately needs to feed into varieties that can actually be deployed on this kind of timescale. This talk was especially relevant to me because next year I will be starting a new project of my own on controlling methane emissions by developing rice root mutants, and seeing how IRRI is approaching the same problem from a breeding and genomics angle gave me many ideas to carry into that work.

What I found most challenging was the sheer breadth of the programme. With concurrent sessions running from climate resilience and gene editing to plant pathology, bioinformatics and AI, there was always more happening than I could attend. One session I was glad I managed to catch covered the discovery that the rice blast fungus *Magnaporthe oryzae* has its own functional circadian clock, and that infections established at dawn are considerably more severe than those started at dusk, a nice reminder of how much basic biology is still being uncovered even in a well-studied pathogen.

At the same time, this conference it helped me see how my own, fairly narrow, proteomics project connects to the much larger global effort to understand and improve rice in the face of a changing climate. Presenting my own poster for the first time at an international symposium of this scale was a huge honour, and it has left me with real confidence and a long list of new ideas going into the next stage of my research.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the Association of Applied Biologists for the Travel Grant that made my attendance at ISRFG26 possible. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Sun Tae Kim, and my co-authors, Dr. Soeui Lee, Dr. Ravi Gupta, and Dr. Cheol Woo Min, for their support in developing the work presented at this meeting.

Dr Abubakar Halilu Girei

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Attending ISRFG2026 was a highly valuable and rewarding experience. The symposium provided an excellent platform to present my research to an international audience and receive useful feedback from researchers working at the forefront of rice science. I particularly valued the opportunity to learn about innovative approaches to understanding rice functional traits and their application to improving productivity and environmental sustainability. The interactions with researchers also opened opportunities for future international collaboration, particularly in areas related to sustainable rice production and greenhouse gas mitigation. One challenge was the limited time available to engage in detailed discussions with all the researchers whose work was relevant to my research interests.

Abubakar's Meeting Highlights

1. Poster presentation: Presented my research entitled "Rice Management Practices, Productivity, and Greenhouse Gas Intensity in Smallholder Rice Systems of Northern Nigeria." The presentation highlighted the relationship between rice management practices, productivity and greenhouse gas intensity across major rice-producing areas of Northern Nigeria.
2. Scientific exchange and networking: Engaged with leading researchers working on rice functional genomics, root biology, crop improvement, sustainable rice production and greenhouse gas mitigation. These interactions provided valuable opportunities to exchange research ideas and learn about emerging approaches in rice science.
3. Potential research collaboration: Established and strengthened contacts with researchers from the UK and other countries and discussed potential opportunities for collaborative research on sustainable rice production, water and nutrient management, root traits and greenhouse gas mitigation in rice systems.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the African Climate Action Partnership (AfCAP) Rice Community of Practice (Rice-CoP), with funding generously provided by the Global Methane Hub (GMH). I express my sincere gratitude to the smallholder farmers and field extension teams across Kano, Bauchi, Jigawa, and Yobe States for their cooperation and support during data collection and seasonal field measurements.

I also acknowledge the ISRFG2026 organising committee for providing an excellent platform for scientific exchange, research dissemination and international networking. I am grateful to the Federal University Dutse and all colleagues and collaborators Ahmadu Bello University Zaria whose support and encouragement contributed to making my participation in the symposium possible and worthwhile.



Sundaresan Venkatesan introducing Global Methane Hub's Rice Methane Innovation Accelerator programme at ISRFG 2026.

The International Symposium on Rice Functional Genomics 2026 provided an excellent platform for researchers, scientists and students to exchange knowledge on recent advances in rice genetics, genomics and molecular breeding. The meeting brought together expertise from diverse areas of rice research and provided valuable exposure to emerging technologies and approaches for understanding and improving complex traits in rice.

One of the major highlights for me was gaining insights into recent developments in rice functional genomics, particularly gene discovery, genome-wide association studies (GWAS), transcriptomics and functional validation. The presentations demonstrated how integration of genomic and transcriptomic approaches can facilitate the identification and validation of genes controlling important agronomic and stress-related traits.

A particularly relevant aspect of the meeting was the opportunity to present and discuss my research on the genetics of bakanae disease resistance in rice. My research involves the evaluation of 500 Indian rice landraces under controlled inoculated conditions, followed by SNP-based genotyping and GWAS to identify genomic regions and candidate genes associated with resistance to bakanae disease. Discussions with researchers provided useful perspectives on the application of genomic approaches for disease-resistance breeding and helped me consider strategies for integrating GWAS and RNA-seq information for candidate gene identification and validation.

The symposium also provided valuable opportunities for scientific networking and interaction. I interacted with researchers and experts working in rice genomics, genetics and molecular breeding, exchanged research ideas and learned about emerging methodologies that can potentially be incorporated into my future research. These interactions also highlighted the importance of multidisciplinary approaches and collaboration in translating genomic discoveries into practical crop improvement.

The meeting also gave me new ideas for integrating GWAS and RNA-seq data to strengthen candidate gene identification and subsequent validation. Exposure to different research strategies helped me understand how complementary genomic approaches can be combined to move from the identification of significant genomic regions to the characterization of biologically relevant candidate genes.

One of the challenging yet valuable aspects of the meeting was keeping pace with the wide range of advanced genomic, bioinformatic and molecular techniques presented by researchers from different fields. However, this challenge encouraged me to explore these approaches further and identify methods that could be effectively applied to my own research.

Overall, the symposium broadened my scientific perspective, enhanced my awareness of current trends in rice functional genomics and provided an important opportunity to communicate my research to an international scientific audience. The experience has motivated me to further strengthen my research and explore integrative approaches for understanding the molecular basis of bakanae disease resistance and ultimately contributing to the development of disease-resistant rice varieties.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely acknowledge the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for providing financial support that enabled me to attend the International Symposium on Rice Functional Genomics 2026. I also gratefully acknowledge the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, for funding the project File No. F1/Rice Landraces/Gen/2020-18, which provided research support and resources relevant to my work on rice genetics and disease resistance. I sincerely thank Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) and my supervisors, Dr. Najeebul Rehman Sofi and Dr. Sajad Majeed Zargar, for their guidance, encouragement and institutional support. I am also thankful to the symposium organisers, speakers, researchers and fellow participants for making the meeting a valuable and enriching scientific experience.



Meeting Reports - International Conference on Photosynthesis Research 2026

We were delighted to host ICPR26 in July, bringing together 750 researchers from around the world for the main ICPR event in Liverpool and its satellite meetings across the UK. The AAB were very glad to be able to support the attendance of 18 early-career researchers and a handful of carers through our early-career and carer & accessibility travel grant schemes. This month we bring you the last of their meeting reports!

Aashna Khan
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It was a genuine privilege to be part of the International Congress for Photosynthesis Research 2026. I was lucky enough to meet researchers who spanned the full breadth of photosynthesis research, from structural biophysics of the water-oxidising complex to whole-canopy phenotyping in the field. As my own research sits at the intersection of several of the conference's core themes, ICPR26 offered a direct view of where the wider field is heading.

In preparing for the meeting, I went through the abstract book in advance and flagged the posters and talks most relevant to my project; in the end almost everything felt useful, and I was very grateful that sessions were recorded so I could catch talks that clashed with ones I had already committed to. I attended sessions that directly linked to my research, and I was keen to learn more about, such as the 'Regulation of electron transport – molecular mechanisms', 'Regulation of ROS production and signalling' and 'Biogenesis of the photosynthetic apparatus'. I also attended sessions centred on fields I wanted to learn more about, such as, 'Artificial photosynthesis and biohybrid systems' and 'Engineering photosynthesis'. Each gave me insights into the current research landscape while also providing me with new approaches to tackle my research, and new perspectives with which to examine my results going forward in my PhD.



I presented a poster on my own research into electron transport regulation and stress mitigation via PTOX in de-etiolating barley. The conversations it generated were genuinely valuable: several attendees offered perspectives I had not considered, and I am now actively working on follow-up experiments, such as a greening experiment in presence of a PSII-inhibitor in the confocal microscope to confirm potential conclusions suggested by my poster. There is also a particular thrill in meeting the authors of papers you have cited and re-read many times. Several of the speakers' foundational work underpins my own research and to meet them and get their insights on my poster felt like meeting a celebrity! My thanks go to everyone who took the time to engage with the work.

One of the highlights for me was watching other early career researchers present their work and to learn from them. These sessions taught me as much about presenting as they did about the science

itself, and I kept notes throughout on the way they structured their talks, handled questions, and communicated complex science to such a broad audience. It was also wonderful to hear how colleagues I've previously worked with have progressed their research, and to learn about new techniques such as expansion microscopy, reactive oxygen species assays and structural modelling.

“Beyond the science, it was a pleasure to reconnect with people I had met at previous conferences and workshops. Photosynthesis research is a relatively close-knit community, and having a growing network of familiar faces made the meeting feel welcoming. I particularly enjoyed the poster sessions, both presenting my own work and seeing what other early career researchers have been developing since we last spoke.”

Being now in the third year of my PhD, I also noticed how differently I engaged with the exhibitor stalls compared to earlier in my studies. In my first year I was, in all honesty, largely following protocols because that is what the machine or the manual told me to do. Now I understand much more of the rationale behind each step, which meant I could ask meaningful, specific questions, for example, discussing extraction protocol optimisations with Agrisera, building on an online workshop of theirs I had attended earlier in the year. Small moments like that were a good, tangible measure of how attending this conference had a direct positive impact on my development as a researcher.

Conversations about future opportunities, such as upcoming conferences, growing labs, and companies expanding their research teams, were also a welcome change from the more discouraging things I have heard recently about the academic job market. Coming away from ICPR26, I feel noticeably more optimistic about finding a viable pathway in academia after my PhD.

Acknowledgements

My attendance at ICPR26 was made possible by a travel grant from the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB), which I gratefully acknowledge. My wider PhD research is funded by the University of Manchester. I would also like to thank the organisers of the event for facilitating this conference where the many speakers, poster presenters, and delegates across the week's sessions could share their work and engage with mine.

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The International Conference on Photosynthesis Research 2026 (ICPR26) brought together scientists working on different aspects of photosynthesis, ranging from structural biology and spectroscopy to computational studies and plant physiology. Since my Ph.D. research focuses on photosynthetic organisms and proteins involved in photosynthesis and photoprotection under energetically stressful conditions, attending this conference was directly relevant to my thesis work. It provided me with an opportunity to learn about the latest developments in the field, present my own research, and interact with experts whose work has been an important part of my scientific training.

At both the Satellite Meeting and the main conference, I presented my current work in the form of a poster. My research focused on the structure of the high-light-inducible protein complex HliA–HliC together with ultrafast energy transfer studies that help explain its role during high-light stress. As this represents one of the first structural studies of this protein complex, the work generated considerable interest from scientists working in different areas of photosynthesis research. Many researchers approached me with questions and suggestions regarding the structural aspects of the protein, possible mechanisms of energy dissipation, and future directions for the project. These discussions were extremely valuable because they allowed me to look at my research from different perspectives and helped me identify experiments and analyses to strengthen the study.

Receiving feedback from scientists working with different techniques was particularly beneficial. While my own research is focused on ultrafast spectroscopy and energy transfer, many of the researchers I interacted with specialized in structural biology, molecular biology, computational chemistry, and molecular dynamics simulations. Discussing my work with experts from these different backgrounds helped me better understand how complementary techniques can be combined to answer biological questions more comprehensively. It also made me realize the importance of integrating structural, spectroscopic, and computational approaches to obtain a complete understanding of protein function.

The Satellite Meeting was especially valuable because it provided a more focused environment where discussions between participants were longer and more interactive. I had the opportunity to attend presentations by several leading scientists in the field, including Roberta Croce, Ritsuko Fujii, Lorenzo Cupellini, and many other established researchers, as well as presentations by Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers. Listening to their work gave me a better understanding of the current developments in photosynthesis research and highlighted several areas that are closely connected to my own project. More importantly, I had the opportunity to discuss my research directly with several experts in the field and receive valuable feedback on my work. These conversations have influenced the way I think about my current research and have given me potential new directions to explore during my Ph.D.

The main conference covered a much broader range of topics within photosynthesis research, exposing me to areas beyond my immediate specialization. I attended sessions on cryo-electron microscopy, molecular dynamics simulations, computational modeling, protein structure determination, spectroscopy, and photosynthetic regulation. It was exciting to see many of these results before they are formally published, giving insight into the newest discoveries and emerging trends in the field. Seeing how different research groups approach similar scientific questions using different methodologies also broadened my perspective and highlighted the strengths and limitations of each technique.

“From a personal perspective, presenting my work at such a large international conference significantly improved my confidence in communicating with my research.”

Discussing my project with internationally recognized experts required me to explain both the broader significance of my work and the technical details in a clear and concise manner. Each discussion helped me refine how I present my research and identify the aspects that are most interesting to the wider scientific community. This experience will undoubtedly help me during future conference presentations, my Ph.D. defence, and future collaborations.

Overall, attending ICPR26 was an extremely valuable experience for both my scientific development and my doctoral research. It allowed me to present my results to an international audience, receive constructive feedback from leading



“Bill Rutherford performing at the dinner was amazing. I just knew him as an eminent scientist with over 22 thousand citations, but he was an amazing musician” - Shubhankar’s meeting highlight

researchers, learn about the latest advances in photosynthesis research, and build professional relationships that may lead to future collaborations. The knowledge, ideas, and connections I gained during both the Satellite Meeting and the main conference will directly contribute to the continuation of my Ph.D. project and help me become a more independent and well-rounded researcher.

Acknowledgements

I am really thankful to AAB for providing me with the travel grant as it will help me tremendously towards recouping some of the costs of attending this conference. I am also thankful to my supervisor, Prof. Tomas Polivka who encouraged me to apply for this conference and helped introduce me to some of the scientists who have defined this field.

ICPR2026 brought together hundreds of photosynthesis researchers at the LEX Liverpool for five days of plenaries, concurrent sessions, and poster receptions. I presented a talk in the Roles and Regulation of Photorespiration session, organised by Amanda Cavanagh and Stefan Timm, on the acclimation of C2 photosynthesis to low CO₂ and its implications for C4 evolution. This was the first time I had presented this work to an audience of photorespiration specialists, and the feedback was affirming.

I also attended the C4 and CAM for Photosynthetic Improvement session, co-organised by Julian Hibberd and Maria Ermakova, with a keynote by Jane Langdale. I had a productive conversation with one speaker, Lei Hua, about evolution-inspired approaches to engineering improved photosynthesis. The Engineering Photosynthesis session, with Andreas Weber as an invited speaker, was useful for thinking about how molecular approaches could complement my comparative phylogenetic methods.

“The most useful aspect of the meeting was making lasting connections with researchers from different countries that could lead to productive collaborations.”

One highlight outside the concurrent sessions was a conversation with Xinguang Zhu, which initiated a collaboration involving engineering C2 photosynthesis into Arabidopsis. Immediately before ICPR, I attended and spoke at the C4-60 satellite meeting at Lancaster University (23–25 July), celebrating 60 years since the discovery of C4 photosynthesis. I gave a talk in the C4 Evolution session alongside Shifeng Cheng and Martha Ludwig, and the two-day meeting brought together most of the international C4 community in one room. The format it easy to have extended conversations with people whose papers I had been reading throughout my PhD. In particular, I was able to make meaningful connections with folks at Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf, Germany, that I wouldn't have otherwise been able to at conferences in North America.

This was my first ICPR. The previous meeting was held in New Zealand in 2022, during my second year of PhD when I had no results yet to present. Attending in 2026, with a completed dataset and a manuscript nearly ready for submission, made the timing feel right. I am defending my PhD in August 2026, and ICPR came at a critical moment in my transition to postdoctoral research. I was able to meet in person with researchers whose groups I am applying to for postdoctoral positions. These conversations are difficult to have meaningfully over email or Zoom, and the conference provided the context to discuss research directions and fit in a way that would not have been possible otherwise.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Association of Applied Biologists for the Early Career Travel Grant that supported my attendance at ICPR2026. I also acknowledge travel funding from the Society for Experimental Biology (Company of Biologists Travel Grant) and the Centre for Global Change Science at the University of Toronto. The C4-60 satellite meeting was organised by Drs. Marjorie Lundgren and Robert Sharwood, who covered registration, accommodation, and transport for invited speakers. I thank my supervisor for his support throughout my PhD and for encouraging me to attend this meeting. Finally, thank you to the ICPR2026 organising committee and the AAB for putting together an excellent conference.



Arthur presenting his research on the main stage in the ICPR2026 concurrent session on Roles and Regulation of Photorespiration.

ICPR26 was especially valuable because it placed my applied biophotovoltaic research within the wider photosynthesis community. I found the poster discussions particularly useful: explaining my results to researchers from different specialisms revealed which parts of the story were immediately convincing and which mechanisms require stronger experimental evidence. One challenge was the very broad and intensive programme. Many interesting sessions ran close together, so it was not possible to explore every topic in equal depth. At the same time, this breadth was a strength because it exposed me to approaches outside my usual electrochemistry-focused work. The experience increased my confidence in discussing my research, sharpened the questions for my next experiments and confirmed the value of studying non-model, salt-tolerant photosynthetic microorganisms for sustainable bioelectrochemical applications.

Eba's Meeting Highlights:

1. New perspectives on photosynthetic electron transport

A major highlight was the breadth of research addressing how photosynthetic organisms capture, regulate and distribute energy. The programme connected fundamental work on reaction centres and electron-transport pathways with questions about photoprotection, carbon metabolism and environmental acclimation. For my doctoral research, these sessions reinforced the importance of examining extracellular electron transfer together with the physiological state of the photosynthetic machinery. They also helped me think more carefully about how measurements of oxygen evolution, carbon fixation, NADPH dynamics, P700 redox changes and chlorophyll fluorescence can be integrated with electrochemical measurements rather than interpreted separately.

2. Productive discussions around my doctoral research

The poster sessions and informal discussions gave me an excellent opportunity to present and discuss my work on saline biophotovoltaic systems. My project compares non-model photosynthetic microorganisms, including the fast-growing and salt-tolerant cyanobacterium *Synechococcus* sp. PCC 11901, to identify organisms that maintain exoelectrogenic activity under saline conditions. I shared observations showing that salt tolerance, growth and photocurrent production do not always change in parallel. For example, some organisms can maintain photocurrent even when growth is reduced by salinity. Conversations with other researchers helped me refine questions about acclimation, the origin of extracellular electrons, electrode–cell interactions and the relationship between photosynthetic electron transport and long-term current stability.

3. Ideas and connections for the next phase of the project

A third highlight was the opportunity to learn from posters and talks on cyanobacterial physiology, fast-growth phenotypes and regulatory mechanisms. The meeting generated useful ideas for the next two years of my PhD, particularly for characterising PCC 11901 under combinations of salinity, temperature, carbon supply and light intensity. I returned with a clearer plan to connect biophotovoltaic performance with acclimation and reversibility, photosystem regulation, redox balance and carbon metabolism. The conference also expanded my professional network and introduced me to researchers whose methods and perspectives are relevant to my project.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank the Association of Applied Biologists for the travel grant that supported my attendance at ICPR26, and the conference organisers, including Geraint Parry and Jordan, for organising and facilitating the meeting. I am grateful to the University of Turku, the Molecular Plant Biology Unit and the Photomicrobes Group for supporting my doctoral training and conference participation. I also thank my supervisors, Professor Yagut Allahverdiyeva-Rinne and Dr Laura T. Wey, for their scientific guidance, and all conference participants who shared constructive feedback and made the visit professionally rewarding.

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Attending the International Conference on Photosynthesis Research 2026 (ICPR26) in Liverpool, United Kingdom, was a highly stimulating and important experience for me as a Master's student. The AAB Travel Grant Programme made it possible for me to take part in this international meeting and significantly reduced the financial barriers associated with travelling abroad. The conference provided an opportunity not only to learn about current research in photosynthesis, but also to reflect on my future research activities and career path.

The first and most important highlight of ICPR26 was giving my first poster presentation at an international conference. Before the meeting, I was concerned about whether I would be able to communicate effectively in English and explain the relevance and significance of my research clearly. However, the attendees who visited my poster listened attentively and engaged with my work. Although I was initially nervous, I was able to discuss my research with them and answer their questions. This experience gave me greater confidence and strengthened my motivation to participate more actively in future international conferences. During the poster session, I also had the opportunity to speak with PhD students presenting nearby. We introduced our research to one another and exchanged encouragement about our future work, which was a particularly meaningful experience at this early stage of my research career.

A second highlight was the opportunity to attend sessions covering a remarkably broad range of topics. ICPR26 brought together photosynthesis researchers from around the world, and the research topics represented were highly diverse. The conference featured numerous thematic sessions, with up to three sessions running in parallel at any one time, allowing me to appreciate the breadth of photosynthesis research. As talks of interest were often scheduled at the same time, it was not always easy to decide which session to attend. Despite the large number and wide variety of presentations, the sessions ran smoothly throughout the conference. I was impressed by the excellent organisation and the considerable effort of the organising team in delivering such a well-coordinated programme. The poster presentations were also diverse, ranging from fundamental molecular biology to photoinhibition, evolution, light-harvesting antenna systems, structural analysis, and genetics. The research covered a wide range of photosynthetic organisms, from cyanobacteria to plants, allowing me to encounter research that approached photosynthesis from many different perspectives. Exposure to numerous topics beyond my own research area broadened my perspective and provided a valuable opportunity to reconsider how my own work can be positioned within the wider field of photosynthesis research.

A third highlight was the opportunity to experience an international community of photosynthesis researchers first-hand. At the conference, researchers from different countries and institutions were actively discussing their work across a range of specialisms and career stages. As this was my first international conference, I was impressed to see how many researchers around the world are working on photosynthesis and developing the field by sharing their knowledge and perspectives. Although I was not yet able to approach and speak with many researchers proactively, the experience encouraged me to become more confident in participating in discussions and communicating my own research within the international research community in the future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the AAB Travel Grant Programme for providing financial support towards my attendance at ICPR26.



Rion outside the LEX Liverpool venue.

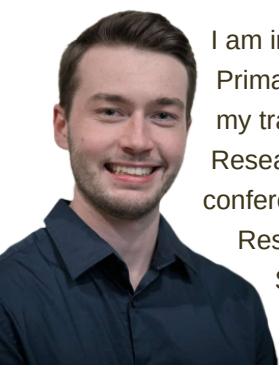
Russell Woodford
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ICPR26 was a fantastic conference that provided me with a wealth of experiences and memories. The biggest highlight of my attendance was presenting my research in the session on 'Photoprotection: mechanisms, dynamics and regulation'. This was my first opportunity to present a talk to an international audience and it was exciting to share the research I have been working on recently with peers from around the world who share the same niche interests as me. The feedback I received following my presentation provided me with interesting new perspectives and will help shape my future research directions.

Being able to discuss the complexities of electron transport and photoprotection with likeminded researchers was another standout moment. It is uncommon for me to have such in-depth discussions with other scientists who fully grasp the details of my research and can provide outside perspectives, so I feel very fortunate to have had such thoughtful and intelligent discussions at this meeting. Furthermore, as an early career researcher, it was incredibly rewarding to be able to interact with colleagues across a range of different career stages, hear about their experiences and identify potential future collaborators. Being able to interact with a range of scientists, including PhD students, post-docs, mid-career lab leaders and esteemed professors gave me a great appreciation for the strength and diversity of the photosynthesis research community.

Some of the most useful, interesting and challenging parts of the conference surrounded the intricacy and volume of scientific content being presented. It was fascinating listening to and learning about recently published research, as well as exciting, unpublished results. There were many complex new ideas and results presented, truly making it feel like I was embedded at the forefront of photosynthesis research. I particularly appreciated being able to listen to early-career scientists tell the stories of their research and findings, discuss the challenges they faced, and hear from others with a similarly deep passion for photosynthesis as me. Being surrounded by such an incredible amount of research and a huge number of researchers became an exciting and fun challenge. With multiple concurrent sessions and an incredible volume of posters, it was sometimes tricky to select the session that was of most interest, or to make sure I made enough time to attend every poster I was keen on and talk to everyone I wanted to. Ultimately, though, this meant that the conference was always lively and active, with no shortage of people to talk to or scientific content to consume.

Acknowledgements



I am immensely grateful to the various organisations that financially supported my attendance at ICPR26. Primarily, I'd like to thank the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) for a student travel grant that enabled my travel and an Early-Career Participation Award from the International Society of Photosynthesis Research that assisted in covering the costs of conference registration. Additionally, my attendance at the conference and the research I presented would not have been possible without funding from the Grains Research and Development Corporation, Monash University Impact 2030 Scholarship, Monash University School of Biological Sciences Travel Grant and Australian Plant Phenomics Network Postgraduate Internship Award. Finally, I'd like to thank all of the organisers, volunteers and chairs for developing such an intellectually stimulating programme and making ICPR26 such a wonderful conference.

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Thanks to the travel grant from the Association of Applied Biologists, I had the opportunity to attend the International Conference on Photosynthetic Research (ICPR), held in Liverpool from 26–30 July 2026. The conference covered a broad range of topics, from climate change and crop improvement to exciton transfer and the regulation of photosynthetic electron flow. The scientific programme included a mixture of talks, poster sessions and discussions, creating an engaging environment to learn about recent developments across the field of photosynthesis.

One of the main highlights for me was the opportunity to discuss my own research with experts in the field. In particular, I had several valuable conversations about photoactivation and was able to get feedback on which aspects are still poorly understood and could benefit from further investigation. These discussions gave me new perspectives on my own work and helped me identify questions that I had not previously considered. I also had the opportunity to meet several leading researchers in my field and present my research to them. One particularly encouraging outcome was the possibility of sharing data and developing a future collaboration, potentially including co-authorship. Having so many leading scientists working on photosynthesis in one place made the conference a unique opportunity to establish new scientific connections.

A second highlight was the excellent selection of talks and the variety of topics covered throughout the meeting. The parallel and themed sessions made it possible to focus on areas closely related to my own research while also exploring topics that were outside my usual focus. This was particularly valuable for getting a broader understanding of where the field currently stands. It was interesting to see which research areas are developing rapidly, which questions have already been addressed in considerable detail, and which important questions remain unanswered.

A third important experience was simply getting an overview of the research currently being conducted across the field. Attending the conference helped me recognise broader trends in photosynthetic research and put my own projects into a wider scientific context. In particular, I gained new perspectives on some of my own projects, including questions related to impairment of photosystem II. Seeing how similar questions are approached by different research groups was useful for considering alternative experimental approaches and interpretations.

The breadth of the conference was also somewhat challenging. With several interesting sessions taking place in parallel, it was sometimes difficult to decide whether to attend a talk closely related to my own work or use the opportunity to learn about something completely new. I found myself thinking about how to balance developing my own specialisation with maintaining a broader understanding of the field. The sheer amount of research being conducted in photosynthesis was also slightly overwhelming, but in a positive way. It made me reflect on where my own research fits within the wider field and which questions I would like to focus on in the future.

Overall, attending ICPR was a highly valuable experience, both scientifically and personally. The conference gave me new ideas for my research, valuable feedback from experienced scientists, and opportunities to establish new collaborations. It also helped me better understand the current direction of the field and consider how my own work can contribute to it.



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In my career I have attended dozens of international meetings – some specialized in photosynthesis, others in related fields. The 2026 International Conference on Photosynthesis Research has been one of the most memorable and impressive in many ways. More importantly, it has tangibly shaped my current and future research with immediate effects. I found that the topics I'm currently working on are also investigated by several other groups that have produced results relevant and useful to my own work. Here are some highlights:

1. Structure and function of photosystems I and II in Euglena.

Euglena gracilis, an eukaryotic flagellate that has both algal and protozoan characteristics, employs an innovative photosynthetic apparatus that is a product of secondary endosymbiosis, gene multiplication and repurposing and horizontal gene transfers. Cryoelectron microscopy has revealed high resolution structures of its photosynthetic complexes, especially Photosystem I that are helping us understand and model its unusual spectroscopic properties. I had the opportunity to listen to oral and poster presentations on *E. gracilis* and have direct discussions that gave me directions and ideas on the interpretation and modelling of our spectroscopy data on *Euglena* Photosystem I. We discussed details of our exciton dynamics models with experts and have already incorporated their suggestions in our manuscript.

2. Ultrafast spectroscopy of Photosystem II reaction center and antenna complexes

I co-authored a poster on two-dimensional spectroscopy of cyanobacterial PSII core complexes and isolated core antenna. Similar results using somewhat different sample preparations and experimental conditions were also presented by other groups. After talking to each other, we came to the agreed conclusion that it would be best to share our results and find common solutions, interpretations and a quantitative model, taking into account all results together, which would be more revealing than each lab working on its own partial dataset.

3. Excitation dynamics of algal Photosystem I super- and megacomplexes

As we have been presenting spectroscopic analyses on algal Photosystem I complexes, we were approached by other groups who have asked similar questions about phylogenetically and structurally different types of algal Photosystem I. We have now scheduled collaborative experiments and are planning to apply for funding to include this collaboration to unite our complementary expertise for research of common interest.

These are only a few examples of the many interactions and connections I had during the conference, that demonstrate what I believe a conference of this kind is meant to provide – immediate awareness of the latest, mainly yet unpublished research in the area, open discussions with peers and experts touching practical details and knowledge that are often not fully accessible from the literature, sparking of new ideas for how to put our own results into broader context or about new directions and collaborations.

All this was possible thanks to a flawless conference organization – both in terms of the brilliant selection of speakers, thoughtful grouping of sections for the lectures and posters, generous time and space for discussions and the continuous on-stage and behind-the-scenes support from the organizers and the professionals at the venue. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of this meeting and I'm looking forward to attending the next meeting if I can.

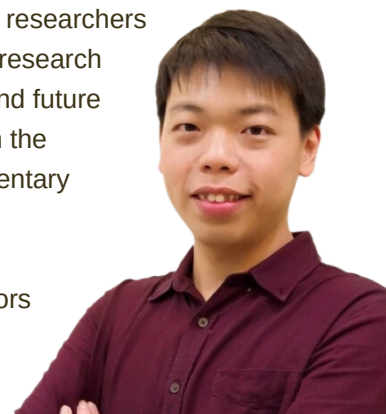
Dr Edi Sudianto *University of Liège, Belgium*

The purpose of attending the 1st Satellite Meeting on the Evolution of Photosynthesis was to participate in one of the most prestigious meetings in the field of photosynthesis, engage with the latest research developments, present and discuss my research with the scientific community, and establish collaborations with researchers working in related fields. The conference provided an opportunity to enhance my knowledge of current methodologies, emerging research directions, and technological advances relevant to my work.

This meeting covered a broad range of topics in the origin of photosynthesis, cyanobacteria evolution, origin of plastids, photosynthetic eukaryotes, evolution of heterotrophic strategies, carbon fixation, and geo- and astrobiology. All of the oral presentations are very engaging, with the latest developments and research directions being presented. I truly enjoy this small-scale meeting, with ample time for discussion and opportunities for collaboration.

I delivered an oral presentation entitled “Horizontal gene transfers underpin ribose heterotropy and central carbon metabolism remodeling in Gloeobacteraceae”, where I engaged in discussions with esteemed researchers from institutions around the world. These interactions provided valuable feedback on ongoing research and facilitated the exchange of ideas regarding experimental design, analytical approaches, and future research directions. The discussions following my presentation provided valuable feedback on the evolutionary interpretation of horizontal gene transfer events and suggested several complementary analytical approaches that I will consider in future work.

The conference included networking events that enabled discussions with potential collaborators and provided opportunities to strengthen existing professional relationships. Conversations focused on shared research interests, potential collaborative projects, and opportunities for



future scientific exchanges. Presenting my research also increased the visibility of our research group and institution within the international molecular evolution community.

The information and experience gained from the conference will be disseminated within my research group through discussions with colleagues, presentations within my research group, and by incorporating relevant methodological advances into ongoing projects. Relevant methodological advances and scientific findings will be incorporated into ongoing projects where appropriate. The contacts established during the meeting are expected to support future collaborations and facilitate the exchange of expertise.

Participation in the 1st Satellite Meeting on the Evolution of Photosynthesis was highly valuable both scientifically and professionally. The conference provided exposure to cutting-edge research, facilitated meaningful scientific discussions, and created opportunities for future collaborations. The knowledge, feedback, and professional connections gained during this meeting will contribute directly to the development of my ongoing research and future scientific collaborations.

Acknowledgements

The financial support provided by the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB) made it possible for me to attend the meeting while still able to provide childcare for my child. This support enabled me to travel with my family and participate in scientific sessions, networking opportunities, and professional development activities that would otherwise have been difficult to access. Attendance has strengthened my research capacity and contributed to my continued professional development as an independent researcher. I truly appreciate the support given by AAB through the Carer and Accessibility Fund.



Meeting Reports - ACRYRED 2026

Back in June we were pleased to help organise the final in-person general meeting of the ACRYRED COST Action in Palermo, Sicily. With the group now officially joining as AAB's newest specialist group, this month we're bringing you the last of the early-career travel reports.



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With support from COST Action CA21149 ACRYRED and the AAB Early Career Travel Grant, I attended the ACRYRED General Meeting, themed Acrylamide in Cereal Products: Progress and Prospects, in Palermo, Italy, on 3–4 June 2026. The meeting brought together international experts to share advances in acrylamide research and mitigation, providing a valuable opportunity to present post-doc work, exchange knowledge and strengthen scientific connections. The meeting was especially meaningful for my career because it marked an important transition between completing my postdoctoral research and developing the next stage of my independent academic work shortly after I returned to Türkiye following my postdoctoral period in Madrid. Meeting former colleagues again and speaking face to face with researchers whose interests closely relate to mine helped maintain the scientific continuity established

during my time abroad. Presenting the project to specialists in the field gave me greater confidence in the scientific contribution of our findings and provided new ideas for subsequent research.

1. Presenting my postdoctoral research

One of the main highlights was delivering an oral presentation entitled “Impact of Air-Fryer Technology on the Formation of Heat-Induced Contaminants in Cereal-Based Biscuits”, focusing on acrylamide formation in cereal-based biscuits prepared using emerging domestic cooking technologies. A key message of my presentation was that air frying should not be considered safer than conventional baking. The results indicated that acrylamide formation may vary considerably between air-fryer models, highlighting the importance of device-specific heating characteristics alongside product formulation. Presenting these findings to researchers specialising in acrylamide formation, mitigation and exposure assessment provided an opportunity to discuss the food-safety implications of increasingly popular domestic cooking technologies. The questions and feedback received after the presentation also offered valuable perspectives for interpreting and communicating our findings.

2. Scientific exchange with the ACRYRED community

A second highlight was the opportunity to engage directly with researchers working across the acrylamide research pathway, from precursor composition and formation mechanisms to mitigation, dietary exposure assessment, health effects, regulatory considerations and risk communication. The meeting illustrated how effectively the different ACRYRED Working Groups complement one another.

I was particularly interested in the studies exploring how crop genetics, environmental conditions and agricultural practices can reduce the acrylamide-forming potential of raw materials. Other presentations introduced promising processing-based approaches, including fermentation, ingredient reformulation and optimisation of heating conditions. Together, these contributions showed that effective mitigation requires coordinated interventions throughout the cereal supply chain, rather than relying on a single measure during food preparation. As a nutrition and dietetics researcher, I also valued the discussions during scientific sessions that connected chemical food safety with nutritional quality, consumer behaviour, and public health. The studies on exposure assessment, consumer awareness, gut microbiota, and the balance between nutritional value and contaminant reduction broadened my perspective on how experimental findings can translate into meaningful dietary guidance. The closing round-table discussion brought these different areas together and encouraged participants to consider how current knowledge could inform future research, legislation and practical mitigation strategies. Exchanging views with researchers from food chemistry, plant science, food processing, toxicology and nutrition was particularly valuable and reinforced the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing acrylamide exposure.

3. Strengthening international collaboration

Centred on the theme Acrylamide in Cereal Products: Progress and Prospects, the Palermo meeting brought together experts from academia, research institutions, industry and policy. Covering the cereal supply chain from crop improvement and acrylamide formation to mitigation, monitoring, dietary exposure, health effects and regulation, the programme provided a strong platform for international and cross-sector exchange. Poster presentations further extended this scope through studies on fermentation, extrusion, targeted milling, product reformulation, consumer awareness, and nutritional quality, and showed how research on processing conditions and thermal profiles can link to nutrition, exposure assessment, consumer research, and scientific dissemination. This multidisciplinary and integrated approach was valuable for addressing complex food safety challenges.

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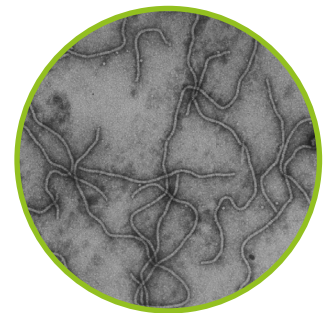
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