

## Preface

We are delighted to welcome you to the “First International Phytoplasma Working Group Meeting” (IPWG meeting) in Bologna!

The main goal of this group is to bring together researchers from entomology, molecular biology and plant pathology to increase and expand knowledge about phytoplasma diseases worldwide.

The meeting will provide a forum for sharing information and strengthen and/or build interactions among participants.

The plants infected by phytoplasmas, as far as we know, are losing the normal capacity to grow and to produce; only in a few cases the infected plants can remain asymptomatic. Many plant symptoms are related to alterations of flowers, fruits and seeds. The insect vectors are not affected by these micro-organisms in the same way as plants: they usually do not become sick and in some extent this endosymbiosis instead of being antagonistic could be mutualistic! When the association is lasting long time (i.e. co-evolution started earlier in the same geographic area) it seems that the vector is less affected than in new associations.

Transferring to people... we hope that such a mutualistic symbiosis will start immediately and a strong co-operation among entomologists, plant pathologists and molecular biologists will last long, and increase in view of understanding and knowing more about how to reduce problems to the worldwide agriculture!

Insecticide treatments may limit the spread of the vectors, but when a phytoplasma disease is present in an area, usually only the entomologists are aware that insect eradication is impossible! It is demonstrated that the vectors, such as the insect transmitting virus, bacteria and protozoan to humans, after some years become resistant to the most frequently applied insecticides. It must be forewarned that only a ‘mitigation’ of insect resistance to pesticides and not a real ‘management’ can be obtained; the only way to control the insect vector populations and diseases is a sustainable and integrated approach. The same species of insect may be vector of more than one phytoplasma and vice versa one phytoplasma may be transmitted by several different species of insect vectors. The efforts to mitigate the incidence of phytoplasma diseases in plants must be coordinated at the international level increasing co-operation between specialists both on basic and applied research.

This meeting is a great opportunity for us, as both organizers and participants, to share mutual experience in such important field to agriculture.

It is of these days the publication of the first synthetic mycoplasma the *Mycoplasma laboratorium*, that was also asked to be patented by his ‘creator’: the new micro-organism could shade important information about origin of life, however should life be patented? It should be more interesting to patent genomes of those phytoplasmas inducing proliferation in plants or elongation of insect life time: they should contain genes for the eternal life...

It is a pleasure of the editorial board of the Bulletin of Insectology to accept papers by leading experts in phytoplasma, a science that may be considered on the borderline among plant pathology, entomology and molecular biology.

Over the four days of the main conference, there will be 131 papers submitted before the end of July 2007. All this will be completed by four invited presentations. We want to thank the contributors for their diligence in preparing their submission. Papers and posters are distributed over 9 sessions.

All the papers published in the second issue of the Bulletin of Insectology volume LX have been reviewed and accepted by the IPWG scientific committee (August, 31, 2007).

As editors we would like to extend our gratitude to all IPWG scientific committee members. We are also very grateful to Davide Montanari for his great assistance during the preparation of the Proceedings of the first IPWG meeting to be published on time. Special thanks to Maria Grazia Bellardi, Samanta Paltrinieri and Alberto Calari for the help in galley proof correction, and to Fabio Montanari for graphic design. Many thanks also to all the members of the IPWG local organizing committee.

The IPWG scientific committee members are discharging their refereeing responsibilities. Errors can be indicated, till December 31, 2007, by authors sending e-mail to the Bulletin of Insectology secretary. Unintentional substantial mistakes will be corrected adding an *errata corrige*, as a last page of the ‘electronic reprint’, at [www.bulletinofinsectology.org](http://www.bulletinofinsectology.org)

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