



## May 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to the ninth AFCP Newsletter. This Summer Edition includes news of future meetings, an update on the joint AFCP/AHDB studentships, a request from the British Crop Production Council and an update from one of our members (CambPlants).

AFCP exists to inspire closer collaboration between charities and organisations in order to drive greater impacts from the charitable donations being made in food and farming.

### FUTURE FORUMS

A few months ago we had three meetings planned for this Spring through to Autumn: an oilseed rape forum in March, an Eastern Regional Meeting in May and a South West Regional Meeting in October. The first two were postponed because of COVID-19 but the third, planned for October 7<sup>th</sup> at the Bath and West Showground, is currently still in the diary.

The oilseed rape forum, entitled 'Management of oilseed rape diseases and pests' has now been re-scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup> 2021 at the University of Hertfordshire. We plan to keep the programme as close as possible to the original. There will be more details nearer the time.

We hope to be able to hold an Eastern Regional Meeting in the autumn. Again, there will be more details when the situation becomes clearer.

We are currently planning to hold both a Student Forum and a National Forum in 2021 and will be providing details of these later in the year.

## **AFCP/AHDB STUDENTSHIPS**

We currently are funding three studentships with AHDB. The students have recently provided updates of their research which can be accessed through the links below.

**Soil health**: Five East of England charities and the AHDB are supporting George Crane in his PhD at the University of Cambridge. He's working with a farmer-led initiative focussing on the impact of rotational and soil management regimes on the symbiotic interaction between mycorrhizal fungi and wheat roots.

**Dairy/Beef health**: Four charities from the South West and Essex alongside the AHDB are funding Bobby Hyde to undertake a PhD at the University of Nottingham to explore ways to minimise the use of antibiotics in calf management.

**Oilseed rape pest control**: Five East of England charities and the AHDB are funding Claire Hoarau to study for a PhD at Harper Adams University on the potential of biopesticides, and optimising the use of conventional insecticides, for the control of cabbage stem flea beetle. This project commenced in Autumn 2019.

**A fourth project**, on modelling net carbon emissions from dairy production systems, with funding from three charities is planned to commence this autumn at the University of Nottingham. More details will be provided in the next Newsletter.

## **BRITISH CROP PROTECTION CONFERENCES (PESTS, DISEASES AND WEEDS)**

The British Crop Production Council (BCPC) has been in existence for more than fifty years and has accumulated a wealth of content from its wide range of events, meetings and conferences.

One of the charitable organisation's key activities, dating back to 1954, has been its annual Brighton Conference, which, for many years, was the major event for the crop production industry, with an extensive range of research being presented alongside the launch of numerous new products.

The British Crop Production Council is looking for financial support from charities to digitise the proceedings of conferences from 1954 onwards.

*The following has been received from BCPC.*

In the pre-digital age, capturing the wealth of learning that was being presented at conferences relied upon the hard copy production of conference proceedings. Some within the industry will no doubt have retained some of these on their bookshelves. However, for many this will be reference material with a huge potential benefit which will be largely unknown and hidden from them.

To that end, BCPC is proposing a significant digitisation project. Comprising more than 25,000 pages of proceedings, the first stage will be to scan and index Abstracts from all papers presented to the conference from 1954 onwards. This will be followed by digitisation of the complete papers.

The use of OCT (optical character recognition) technology will deliver a fully searchable digital archive of past proceedings. Without such an initiative much of this content would at best remain invisible to much of the marketplace, and at worst succumb to rigours of age and become unreadable

*Many trustees and others will have benefited from 'Brighton Conferences' and charities may see this has a great opportunity to ensure this knowledge is available to future generations. For further information, please contact the Managing Director of BCPC, Julian Westaway, at [MD@bcpc.org](mailto:MD@bcpc.org). The total cost of the project is expected to be in the order of £16K.*

## NEWS FROM CAMBPLANTS HUB (University of Cambridge)

**1. Researchers from the Kromdijk Lab** have produced a very easy-to-follow video on how plants are affected by and respond to high light, which can damage the photosynthetic machinery.

<https://www.cambplants.group.cam.ac.uk/news/photoprotection>

**2. Taking stomatal imprints:** observing the tiny pores in leaves around you. A new study using bumblebees has found that the sweetest nectar is not necessarily the best: too much sugar slows down the bees. The results will inform breeding efforts to make crops more attractive to pollinators, boosting yields to feed our growing global population: Vomiting bumblebees show that sweeter is not necessarily better.

<https://www.cambplants.group.cam.ac.uk/news/bumblebees>

**3. COVID-related news.** The Department of Plant Sciences has been involved in developing an interactive tool showing the science behind COVID-19 control measures.

<https://www.cambplants.group.cam.ac.uk/news/interactivetool>. EIT Food

(Cambridge University is a core partner) has launched a COVID 19 Bridge Fund open to innovative startups and scaleups in the agri-food industry.

<https://www.eitfood.eu/covid-19>



**ARE YOU AN INDIVIDUAL SEEKING  
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You're a researcher, a student, maybe planning to do a PhD or CPD to further your career. You have project in mind. In involves...

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Alex Payne, Jim Stevens

AFCP was registered as a company limited by guarantee in February 2008 and became a registered charity in June 2015. The Board and its Directors and advisors represent a range of charities and organisations from across the UK.

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