



INNOVATION
& BUSINESS

30 March – 1 April 2025

**Venue: Wolkenburg
Cologne ■ Germany**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Update March 27, 2025

Conference day 1 - Sunday March 30, 2025

13:15 **Welcome guests for social event**

13:45 **Start social event**

City tour through the center of Cologne including a visit at the Chocolate Museum.

Welcome to Cologne, where history meets sweetness! Get ready to embark on a delightful journey through the heart of this charming city, combined with an indulgent visit to the Chocolate Museum.

Our adventure begins with a stroll through Cologne's historic center, where every cobblestone whispers tales of centuries past. Admire the towering Cologne Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture that has stood as a symbol of the city for over 700 years. As we wander through the quaint streets, our knowledgeable guide will regale you with stories of Cologne's rich history, from Roman times to the bustling medieval era.

Next, we delve into the world of chocolate at the Chocolate Museum, a paradise for chocolate lovers. Learn about the cocoa bean's journey from tropical plantations to delectable treats, and witness skilled chocolatiers crafting mouthwatering delights right before your eyes. And the best part awaits – a sumptuous tasting session where you can savor the finest chocolates, experiencing their nuanced flavors and velvety textures.

Join us for a tour that combines culture, history, and the irresistible allure of chocolate. It's a journey not just for the senses but for the soul – an unforgettable experience in the heart of Cologne. Let's make sweet memories together!

16:00 **Registration desk open**

17:00-17:15 **Welcome and opening CROP Innovations & Business 2025 conference**

by our hosts **Dr. Annick Verween**, Head of biotope by VIB (Belgium)
and **Karl Collins**, Director, Open Innovation & Ecosystems Europe at Bayer Crop Science (Germany)

17:15-19:00 Plenary presentations

Bart Van Hooland, Managing Partner at Thia Ventures (Belgium)

About the investment landscape in Ag-(Bio)tech.

Bart is the Managing Partner at Thia Ventures, where he invests globally at the intersection of food, biotech and health.

He has a longstanding career in biotechnology investing, having led the oncology-focused fund Droia Ventures. Bart started his career at BCG, and later combined active investing with board mandates in innovation.

Recognising the critical importance of novel technology in securing our food supply, he founded Thia with his BCG colleague and former Louis Dreyfus Company CEO, Serge Schoen.

Dr. Felix Büchting, CEO KWS SAAT SE & Co. KGaA (Germany)

How companies are broadening collaborative ecosystems by partnering with startups and research institutes to attract talent, discover emerging technologies and experiment with new business.

Dr. Felix Büchting studied agricultural biology at the Stuttgart-Hohenheim University of Applied Sciences and agricultural sciences and molecular biology at Oregon State University. There he earned his doctorate in the field of plant breeding. From 2010 to 2016, Felix Büchting worked for the flavor and fragrance manufacturer Symrise, where he was responsible for the procurement of agricultural raw materials, among other things, before moving to the Grain Business Unit at KWS and managing it. In 2019, he was appointed to the Executive Board of KWS. Since January 2023, he has been Spokesman of the Executive Board of KWS and is responsible for Research & Breeding, Strategy, Human Resources and Agriculture.

Dr. Petra Jorasch, Manager Plant Breeding Innovation Advocacy at Euroseeds (Belgium)

Petra will give a presentation on policy and regulatory frameworks in Europe that impact the plant breeding and biotechnology industries.

Petra Jorasch holds a PhD in plant molecular biology from the University of Hamburg.

She is an internationally recognized science and industry advocacy expert with more than 20 years of experience in and a deep knowledge of the relevant policy frameworks for seeds, plant science and breeding, access and use of plant genetic resources as well as relevant intellectual property protection systems.

Petra joined Euroseeds in February 2017 as the spokesperson of the EU plant breeding sector on modern plant breeding methods and innovative technologies.

19:00-21:00 Walking dinner

08:30 **Registration desk open**

09:00-09:45 **Plenary program**

Keynote lecture by **Christine Gould**, Founder & CEO GIGA (Switzerland)

Christine will share how new technologies, such as AI-powered tools for crop improvement, are poised to create \$4.5 trillion in economic opportunities annually. She will dive into the barriers preventing these innovations from scaling - such as fragmented value chains and lack of investment - and offer concrete strategies to overcome these hurdles. She will give insights into building impactful collaborations, leveraging new investment models, and unlocking market-ready solutions that can drive meaningful change for people, planet, and profit.

Christine R. Gould is an award-winning innovation leader, entrepreneur, and strategist shaping the future of global food systems. She is the Founder of **GIGA**, an innovation and investment platform tackling billion-dollar challenges and unlocking trillion-dollar opportunities to nourish people and enhance climate resilience. Previously, she founded **Thought For Food® (TFF)**, building the world's leading next-gen agrifood innovation community, engaging 30K+ young talents and accelerating 100+ startups. Christine is the author of "The Change-Maker's Guide to Feeding the Planet" and a sought-after speaker, and served on the Advisory Committee to the UN Food Systems Summit. Her work has been featured in **MIT Tech Review**, **The Financial Times**, **The Economist**, and **BBC**; she powered innovation programs for leading organizations including Danone, Google, and The Rockefeller Foundation; and she spent a decade at Syngenta in the seeds business working on plant breeding and biotechnology initiatives.

09:45-10:30 **Break**

10:30-12:30 **PARALLEL SESSIONS PART 1**

1A. Realizing the potential of plant genetic resources by leveraging cutting edge technologies

Accessing and utilizing diverse plant genetic resources enables researchers and breeders to develop new crop varieties that are resilient to pests, diseases and environmental stresses, thereby improving global food security. This session will discuss strategies to use these gene banks to develop of future crops.

Hosted by



Moderator: **Anker Sørensen**, Vice President New Business

Presentations:

- **Prof. Dr. Markus Stetter**, Professor at Institute for Plant Sciences, University of Cologne (Germany)
- **Dr. Nora P. Castañeda-Álvarez**, Science Project Coordinator at The Global Crop Diversity Trust (Germany)
- **Ir. Tonny van den Boom**, Global Genetic Resource Coordinator Vegetable Seeds at BASF (NL)
- **Dr. Christoph Dockter**, Head of Cereal Breeding & Trait Development at Carlsberg Research Laboratory (Denmark)

10:30-12:30 1B. New gene-editing (enabling) technologies for crop improvement

The increased use of gene-editing in agriculture can change the way we approach plant breeding and accelerate the discovery and deployment of innovations that offer growers more productive and resilient crops. This session showcases breakthrough developments in gene-editing approaches and -technologies that boost agricultural innovation.

Hosted by  **CORTEVA**[™] CATALYST
agriscience

Moderator: **Dr. Mathias Müller**, Corteva Catalyst Senior Director

Presentations:

- **Dr. Giacomo Bastianelli**, Co-founder & CEO at Rainbow Crops (Belgium)
- **Dr. Joris van Arensbergen**, Founder and CEO at Annogen (NL)
- **Dr. William Pelton**, Co-founder and CEO at Phytoform (UK)
- **Dr. Lennart Hoengenaert**, Coordinator Crop Genome Engineering Facility at VIB - University of Ghent (Belgium)

12:30-13:30 Lunch, networking and exhibition**13:30-15:30 PARALLEL SESSIONS PART 2****2A. IP Rights in Plant Breeding: Corteva v. Inari, A Case Study for the U.S. and Europe**

Intellectual property (IP) and regulatory frameworks play a crucial role in shaping the plant breeding sector. This session explores the complex interplay between IP rights, evolving regulations and their impact on innovation, market access and the use of technology. Participants will gain insight into navigating these challenges to foster collaboration, protect innovations and drive sustainable progress in plant breeding.

Hosted by  **troutman
pepper locke**

Moderator: **Andrew Zappia**, Leader of Health Care and Life Sciences IP Team

Presentations:

- **Tate L. Tischner**, Partner | Registered Patent Attorney at Troutman Pepper Locke (US)
- **Thea van der Wijk**, VP Intellectual Property & Legal Affairs at Keygene (NL)
- **Martin Quanz**, Senior Patent Counsel at Bayer Intellectual Property (Germany)
- **Fleur Tuinzing-Westerhuis**, Counsel at Houthoff (Netherlands)

13:30-15:30 2B. How to accelerate crop breeding

As climate change and population growth increase, the demand to accelerate plant breeding and develop innovative traits is essential. This session explores how these developments are improving crop breeding efforts so that plant breeders can rapidly develop cultivars that meet global demand for food, nutrition, and fibre.

Hosted by



Moderator: **Jürgen Decloedt**, Business Development Manager

Presentations:

- **Shifan Ding**, Global Product Manager at ID Biotech (China)
- **Dr. Petra van Bergeijk**, Scientist at Keygene (NL)
- **Francisco Vilela Pereira**, R&D Climate Adaptation in Agriculture at VITO (Belgium)
- **Dr. Michel Ragot**, CEO at DELTAGee (France)

15:30-16:15 Break**16:15-17:45 Plenary Pitch program**

The pitch program is supported by [biotope](#) ^{by VIB}, [CEPLAS](#) and [StartLife](#).

Academic institutes and startups will get the possibility to pitch their innovative technology, - service or -product to the audience from the international agri-food industry.

Pitching companies - Curated by StartLife, the leading agrifoodtech accelerator in Europe:

- **Agrilife Studio** (France)
- **Amatera Biosciences** (France)
- **Better Seeds** (Israel)
- **Biographica** (United Kingdom)
- **BreedBio** (Belgium)
- **Landman Bio** (Belgium)
- **Plantman** (Germany)
- **Resurrect.bio** (United Kingdom)
- **Sanatech Seed Co.** (Japan)
- **SMARTtray GmbH** (Germany)
- **Zymofix** (Belgium)

17:45-19:00 Reception**19:00-22:00 Conference dinner**

Venue to be announced in the Networkapp and during the plenary closing program part on Monday.

08:30 **Registration desk open**

09:00-09:45 **Plenary program**

Keynote lecture by **Prof. Dr. Maria von Korff Schmising**, Institute for Plant Genetics at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (Germany)

About the importance of exploring natural sources for developing traits for the future.

09:45-10:30 **Break**

10:30-12:30 **PARALLEL SESSIONS PART 3**

3A. The changing plant breeding sector

The plant breeding sector is undergoing rapid transformation due to technological advances, changing regulations and evolving market demands. This session explores key trends reshaping the sector, including the integration of genomic tools, precision breeding techniques and digital agriculture. Join us to discover how these changes are redefining plant breeding practices and what opportunities they present for innovation and sustainability in agriculture.

Hosted by



Moderator: **Dr. Arjen van Tunen**, CEO at TunenAgroFood B.V. advice and coaching (NL)

Presentations:

- **Michiel Reessink**, Chief Commercial Officer
- **Prof. Dr. Wolf Frommer**, Alexander von Humboldt Professor at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (Germany)
- **Dr. Fred Van Ex**, Managing Director at Inari (Belgium)

3B. New crops, applications and commercialisation strategies for the agricultural bioeconomy

Given the challenges of climate change and the need for a transition to circular economies, the known space of agricultural applications is rapidly expanding, as is the potential of plant breeding and engineering techniques. There is now an opportunity to breed crops to produce materials or high-value bioactive compounds such as pharmaceuticals and biologicals. How are these applications being developed and what are the business models are being used to bring them to the market.

Hosted by



Moderator: **Prof. Dr. Ir. Luisa Trindade**, Group Leader Biobased Economy

Presentations:

- **Prof. Wout Boerjan**, Professor at Ghent University (Belgium)
- **Dr. Kathy Munkvold**, Scientific Program Director - Crop Production Systems at Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (US)
- **Dr. Ingrid van der Meer**, Manager Business Unit Bioscience at Wageningen University & Research (NL)
- **Dr. Pádraic Flood**, Founder & CEO Aardaia (NL)

12:30-13:30 **Lunch, networking and exhibition**

13:30-15:30 **PARALLEL SESSIONS PART 4**

4A. Partnering & collaboration strategies in AgTech: How to succeed in the collaboration dynamics between corporates and startups?

Successful partnerships between corporations and startups are crucial for driving innovation in AgTech. This session will explore effective strategies for fostering collaboration, aligning goals and leveraging the strengths of both large organizations and agile startups. Participants will gain insight into dealing with challenges, building trust and creating mutually beneficial partnerships that accelerate advances in agricultural technology and address global food security challenges.

Hosted by 
biotope by VIB

Moderator: **Dr. Anne Helfer**, Startup Support Manager

Presentations:

- **David Dessers**, Founding Partner at CRESCO (Belgium)
- **Dr. Pernille Ollendorf Hede**, CEO at Healthycrop (Denmark)
- **Scott Jarrett**, CEO Elaniti (UK)

4B. Applications of artificial intelligence, machine learning and deep learning in plant breeding

Rapid advances in genomics, phenomics and molecular biology are accelerating crop breeding into the era of artificial intelligence. This session explores the broader potential of AI tools in various facets of breeding, including data collection, unlocking genetic diversity in genebanks and bridging the gap between genotype and phenotype to facilitate crop breeding.

Hosted by  **CEPLAS**
Cluster of Excellence on Plant Sciences

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Guido Grossman

Presentations:

- **Martin Lercher**, Professor of Computational Cell Biology at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (Germany)
- **Prof. Aalt-Jan van Dijk**, professor Data Analysis in the Life Sciences at University of Amsterdam (NL)
- **Finn Gaida**, Co-Founder & CTO at NoMaze (Germany)
- **Anna Freudenreich**, Researcher in Bioinformatics and AI at KeyGene (NL)

15:30-16:15 **Break**

16:15-17:00 **Closing conference program**

with keynote speaker

Dr. Tom Greene, Sr. Director External Innovation Investment at Corteva Agriscience (US)

Innovation Into Impact: Building a More Productive and Sustainable Agriculture Ecosystem Through Collaboration

Agriculture is at a crossroads, with growing pressures to meet productivity and sustainability goals. Companies like Corteva Agriscience are making bold investments in research to help farmers succeed globally—but it takes more than that. A vibrant ecosystem of startups is needed to drive the next generation of solutions. Join Corteva Catalyst's Tom Greene as he discusses the current innovation landscape and how Corteva is fostering innovation by partnering with early-stage companies to build a brighter future for agriculture.

17:00-18:30 **Closing conference reception**

Note: the organisation keeps the right to make changes to the programme at any time.