



INNOVATION
& BUSINESS

30 March – 1 April 2025

**Venue: Wolkenburg
Cologne ■ Germany**

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Update January 13, 2025

Conference day 1 - Sunday March 30, 2025

- 12:45 **Welcome guests for social event**
- 13:00 **Start social event: to be announced**
- 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 by a.o.**
- 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.
- 19:00-21:00 **Conference buffet**

08:30 **Registration desk open**

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

Keynote lecture by **Christine Gould** (Switzerland)

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:

Presentations:

- **Dr. Christoph Dockter**, Head of Cereal Breeding & Trait Development at Carlsberg S/A (Denmark)

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

Moderator:

Presentations:

- **William Pelton**, Co-founder and CEO at Phytoform (UK)
- **Joris van Arensbergen**, Founder and CEO at Annogen (NL)
- **Dr. Giacomo Bastianelli**, Co-founder & CEO at Rainbow Crops (Belgium)

12.30-13:30 **Lunch, networking and exhibition**

13:30-15:30 **PARALLEL SESSIONS PART 2****2A. Navigating the Nexus: Intellectual property and regulatory challenges in plant breeding**

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](#)

Moderator:

Presentations:

- **To be announced**, Troutman Pepper (US)

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:

Presentations:

- **Petra van Bergeijk**, Scientist at Keygene (NL)
- **Michel Ragot**, CEO at DELTAGee (US)

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

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

Early stage companies will get the possibility to pitch their innovative technology, -service or -product to an international audience from the international agri-food industry.

Pitching companies - Curated by [StartLife](#), the leading agrifoodtech accelerator in Europe:

- **To be announced**

17:45-18:45 **Reception**19:00-22:00 **Conference dinner**

08:30 **Registration desk open**

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

Keynote lecture

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:

Presentations:

- To be announced

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 being used to bring them to the market.

Hosted by

Moderator:

Presentations:

- **Prof. Wout Boerjan**, Professor at Ghent University (Belgium)

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

Moderator:

Presentations:

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

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

Moderator:

Presentations:

- **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**

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

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