

Summary of the 4th AsiaBlight International Conference

Editorial: Successes from the International AsiaBlight Network Meeting

The 4th AsiaBlight International Conference, held in Chengdu, China on November 28-29, 2024 convened with remarkable success, uniting researchers, regional representatives, and industry leaders to advance collaborative efforts against late blight. This gathering demonstrated the network's unwavering commitment to address the food and income lost and waste to farmers through innovation, regional engagement, and global collaboration.

Key Achievements

1. Valuable Presentations and Reports:

The meeting featured an opening remarks by Dr. Simon Heck, Director General of CIP, called for research and innovation to be the key to sustainable growth, social inclusion, and regional cooperation in the potato industry, and a presentation by Dequan Zhang, Director of the Urban Institute of Agriculture, providing valuable insights into sustainable agriculture strategies. Regional reports from China, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Vietnam offered a comprehensive overview of efforts to combat late blight in diverse contexts.

2. Progress in Research and Innovation:

Discussions emphasized cutting-edge technologies, including CRISPR-Cas9, advanced fungicide testing, and bio-fungicide development. Joint research initiatives and the exchange of improved potato varieties were highlighted as key priorities.

3. Regional Data Collection and Sharing:

Establishing a centralized knowledge system was pivotal in consolidating baseline data on regional capacities and programs. This system will support targeted proposal development and streamline the network's efforts. Publishing a book on late blight control in member's Regions is necessary and feasible next year.

4. Commitment to Capacity Building:

Plans were outlined to develop training programs, exchange opportunities, and a pan-Asian Decision Support System (DSS) for disease monitoring. Efforts are underway to extend DSS support to Nepal and other regions.

5. Strategic Expansion and Recognition Initiatives:

The network could expand its membership to underrepresented regions, including Bhutan, Lebanon, Jordan, Thailand and Iran. A new recognition and awards program was introduced to celebrate outstanding contributors to AsiaBlight's mission.

6. Enhanced Global Collaboration:

In a significant step toward accelerating the development of a global late blight warning system, EuroBlight joined the meeting online. Representatives from Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, and France shared critical updates on new strains of late blight emerging in Europe, equipping AsiaBlight with essential knowledge to enhance preparedness and seek the future cooperation between both sides.

Moving Forward

The meeting demonstrated the AsiaBlight Network's vital role in advancing sustainable agricultural practices and fostering regional collaboration. The next steps include finalizing regional work plans, completing data submissions, and convening online meetings to engage stakeholders who could not attend in person.

This meeting solidified AsiaBlight's position as a leader in addressing late blight challenges while forging pathways for future innovation by uniting expertise from across Asia and Europe. We can take pride in these achievements, which underscore the impact of our shared vision and collective dedication.

Together, we look forward to translating these accomplishments into transformative actions for farmers, researchers, and industries worldwide.