

Preface to the 13th ISTRC Proceedings

Tropical root and tuber crops have been the subject of a series of international symposia held in various countries for the last couple of decades. It all begun from the efforts of research workers who wanted to share information arising from their research on tropical root crops. Thus, they conducted a series of meetings to discuss tropical root crops. The benefits of such gatherings were so apparent that it was decided to establish an organization to spearhead such meetings. The society that came to be established was a professional scientific association called International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC). The Society, established in 1970, has since been organizing a triennial event, the ISTRC Symposium in different countries. The event has provided a valuable forum where scientists from all tropical and subtropical countries meet to review the current status of root and tuber crops research. The focus of the ISTRC and its symposia is mainly on cassava, sweet potato and yams. Aroids and other tubers form a small part of the presentations.

This proceedings of the 13th triennial symposium of the ISTRC held at the Arusha International Conference Centre in Tanzania from 10-14 November, 2003 reports the meeting of about 200 root and tuber crops scientists, and development workers from 23 countries in four continents (Africa, Asia, Europe and America). The symposium was jointly organized by the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and the International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC). Hon. Dr. Ali Muhamed Shein, the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania officiated the opening ceremony while Hon. Zabein Mhita, MP, Deputy Minister for Science Technology and Higher Education closed the symposium.

The main objective was to bring together people from various research backgrounds to share knowledge, research results and experiences with regard to tropical root and tuber crops. The specific objectives were: to identify knowledge gaps and priority areas for further research and development and the roles for different stakeholders; to synthesize research findings for informed decision making and appropriate policy interventions; and to develop strategies on the way-forward in strengthening public – private collaborative activities aimed at improving food and nutrition security, and reducing poverty.

In this 13th Triennial Symposium of the ISTRC a total of 176 research papers were presented. It also featured a poster and technologies' exhibition. They included research in the areas of Plant Breeding and Biotechnology, Agronomy, Plant Protection, Post- Harvest and Marketing, Social Economics and those representing experiences from the Vitamin A for Africa (VITAA) activities. Three Keynote addresses were made. In cases where full papers were received, these have been published under their appropriated categories. Where full papers were not received, abstracts have been published at the end of each section. This 13th Triennial ISTRC Symposium Proceedings is published in 2 volumes. Volume 1 is composed of Plant Breeding and Biotechnology, Agronomy and Plant Protection papers. Volume 2 is made up of Post-Harvest and Marketing, Socio-economics, Technology Transfer and VITAA papers.

COSTECH and MAFS are highly acknowledged for successfully organizing the symposium with minimum resources from ISTRC Secretariat. The 12 sub committees and their teams that worked day and night to ensure the success of this symposium deserve commendation. India accepted to host the 14th triennial symposium of the ISTRC in November 2006.

The new Executive Council was elected for the 2004-2006 period. Some former council members were retained but in new positions. The Council is made up of:

President: Prof. A. Westby
Vice-President (Fund Raising): Dr. R. Kapinga
Secretary Treasurer: Dr. C. Bonsi
Councillor for Publications: Mr. K. Tomlins

Regional Councillors:
Africa: Dr. M. Akoroda
East Asia: Dr. M. Nakatini
North America/Europe: Dr. P. Vernier
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South Pacific: Dr. Satish Chandra
Caribbean: Dr. Gregory Robin