

COST ACTION FA1204 FINAL CONFERENCE - Vegetable Grafting to Improve Yield and Fruit Quality under Biotic and Abiotic Stress Conditions, 19 – 21 September 2016, Pula, Croatia

Final Report

Vegetable grafting is technique that has been used for a long time in vegetable production, but in the past decades has received more attention as an efficient and sustainable method to improve vegetable yield and quality under stressful conditions. Although this technique has long tradition in Croatia, it is only since recently used in commercial vegetable production, particularly in watermelon field production and tomato hydroponic crop.

The COST FA1204 activities have been aimed to stimulate cutting edge multidisciplinary collaborative research towards identifying and understanding how rootstock-mediated traits can improve vegetable crop yield and quality under biotic and abiotic adverse conditions. Until now, as a result of this action, three Annual Conferences and four Steer Committee meetings were held in the countries participating in COST FA1204.

The Final (4th) Conference of COST FA1204 that was held in Pula from 19 – 21 September 2016, resulted from the four-year work throughout working groups and/or from official and un-official collaborations among members of the Action. The gained knowledge and the skills were presented during Conference and further activities aimed on building of an international multidisciplinary research network were discussed.

Thus, the aims of the Conference were:

- to bring together members of the COST Action FA1204 and to discuss achievements, added value of networking and future plans,
- to bring together experts, academics and practitioners in vegetable grafting to exchange knowledge and to discuss options and strategies for topic improvement,
- to strengthen connection between scientific research and practical implementation.

The program of the Conference contained: six oral presentations per each working group (24 in total); 17 poster presentations; round table including oral presentations of participants from private companies; STSMs section with six oral presentations; book presentation during closing section; technical tour within Istrian region including representative agricultural/historical sites visits.

In order to connect the science with Industry, two private nursery companies (Hishtil Nurseries, Israel and Centro Seia srl Società Agricola, Italy) accepted the COST invitation for the Round table session to present their current and future activities.

The programme sessions were chaired by the working group leaders and co-leaders: WG 1 – Genetic resources and rootstock breeding (Andrew J.Thompson, University of Cranfield, UK; Halit Yetisir, University of Erciyes Kayseri, Turkey); WG 2 - Rootstock-scion interactions and graft compatibility (Jan Henk Venema, University of Groningen, The Netherlands; Ian C.Dodd, Lancaster University, UK); WG 3 – Rootstock mediated resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses (Dietmar Schwarz, Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops, Germany; Roni Cohen, ARO, Newe Ya'ar Research Center, Israel); WG 4 – Rootstock mediated improvement of fruit quality (Cherubino Leonardi, University of Catania, Italy; Carmina Gisbert, COMAV-Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain) and STSm section (Dimitrios Savvas, University of Athens, Greece).

As a result of four-years of activities among members of the Cost Action, the book of vegetable grafting was shown reviewing the scientific issues and technologies of vegetable grafting studied by all four working groups. The book was presented and edited by dr. Dietmar Schwarz.

The Conference participants were informed about the vegetable production in Croatia and its region Istria particularly through the technical visit to vegetable nursery (owner Ivan Dušan), the vineyard of the Institute of Agriculture and Tourism (<http://www.iptpo.hr/>), the cabbage processing facility (<http://www.ciburiproduct.hr/>) and the visit of Agrotourism “Ograde” (<http://agroturizam-ograde.hr/>) for the final networking of the tour. The social part of the programme enable the participants to be familiar with the medicinal and aromatic plants production in Istria also beside the grafting issues by visiting the Park of Aromatic and Medicinal plants in Bale, Istria (<http://www.histriaaromatica.hr/index.php?ln=EN>).

The Conference was attended by 82 participants from Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Albania, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, United Kingdom, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, The Netherlands, Croatia and Slovenia.

In conclusion, an issue of vegetable grafting continues to maintain a high importance in global agriculture according to its role in the alleviation of the effects of abiotic or biotic stresses. However, there are still a lot of unanswered and unexplored topics. Thus, the Final Conference is not the end of the story, established network lines are the assurance for the future activities and challenge.