



ORGANIZATION OF NEMATOLOGISTS OF TROPICAL AMERICA
ONTA NEWSLETTER

<http://www.ontaweb.org/>

June 2023

53rd ONTA ANNUAL MEETING
CAIRO, Egypt, 24-29 September 2023



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“Nematodes and food security: urgency, discovery, and global exchange”



Fig. 1. The Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America (ONTA) in collaboration with the Egyptian Society for Agro-Nematology (ESAN) will meet in Cairo from 24th to 29th September, 2023.

53rd ANNUAL MEETING ONTA
CAIRO, EGYPT

Third Announcement



Fig. 2. Egypt will host the 53rd ONTA Annual Meeting from 24-29th September 2023 with the theme “Nematodes and food security: urgency, discovery, and global exchange”.

The **Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America (ONTA)**, the Local Arrangement Committee represented by members of ONTA, and in collaboration with members of the **Egyptian Society of Agro-Nematology (ESAN)** greet and cordially invite you to participate at the 53rd (LIII) ONTA Annual Meeting to be held in Cairo, Egypt (Fig. 2). The dates will be from **24th September to 29th September, 2023**. Please note the change of venue hotel to hold the annual meeting [see ONTA Newsletter 53 (1)]. The Hilton Pyramids Golf Hotel venue has been changed to the **Sheraton Cairo Hotel & Casino** <https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/caisi-sheraton-cairo-hotel-and-casino/overview/>. This meeting will allow ONTA members to interact with nematologists from North Africa and Middle East and will stimulate exchange of ideas and nematological experiences. ONTA members will have the unique experience of not only learning new aspects of plant and insect nematology, but experiencing a cultural encounter with one of the cradles of human civilization.

We recently have sent to ONTA members via email information about some of the most iconic places to explore in and around Cairo. You can visit the ONTA website (ontaweb.org) and get more details about registration and accommodation. The link <https://ontaweb.org/meeting2023/tour.html> provides details about some of the other incredible places to visit while in Egypt. From the ancient wonders along the banks of the Nile, to exotic Mediterranean and Red Sea destinations with world-class beaches and spectacular under water splendor. ONTA 2023 provides you an amazing opportunity to explore and enjoy one of the world’s top tourist destinations. Take a minute to read about some of the places you can easily access before or after the meeting. And please visit the webpage and contact us if you have any questions about the meeting or travel arrangements. We hope to see many of you in September!

Specific information about scientific program, accommodation, registration costs and travel will be provided soon at the ONTA website and by email kindly sent by Dr Deb Neher.

FROM ONTA'S PRESIDENT



Fig. 3. A: Fahiem El-Borai Kora ONTA's President; B: Poster 53rd Annual Meeting Cairo, Egypt.

Dear ONTA members,

Advances on the 53rd ONTA Annual Meeting in Cairo, Egypt: “Nematodes and food security: urgency, discovery, and global exchange”

On behalf of the Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America (ONTA) and the Egyptian Society for Agro-Nematology, it is our great pleasure to welcome you to Cairo and thank you for participating in the 53rd ONTA Annual meeting (Fig. 3). We started the countdown to the meeting but as we have been thrilled with good registration, we have extended our deadline from June 1st to June 30th for more people to join. This meeting will provide an opportunity to share and acquired information on the newest discoveries in Nematology and interdisciplinary fields. Throughout the meeting, we hope to create an atmosphere where everyone, students and professionals can exchange ideas and establish new collaborations.

We want to express our sincere appreciation to all the program sponsors, exhibitors, and those who registered so far to participate and travel from across the world to be in Cairo. It is your overwhelming support that will allow this conference to take place. I would like to extend my special thanks to the ONTA Executive and ONTA Foundation Committee members (Fig. 4), scientific committee members, key note speakers, and speakers who have volunteered to speak, chair or co-chair sessions at the conference.

We also urge graduate students to register and submit their abstracts to enter the Rodrigo Rodríguez-Kábana best poster competition and/or travel awards both sponsored by the ONTA Foundation.

FROM ONTA'S PRESIDENT (cont.)



Fig. 4. The organization of the 53rd ONTA Annual Meeting has received strong support from ONTA's Executive Committee and the ONTA's Foundation Committee.

The days you are in Cairo will not only be for science but all participants attending the 53rd Annual Meeting of ONTA will be able to visit so many places in and around Cairo. Please visit our Tour Egypt Tab at the conference website at <https://ontaweb.org/meeting2023/tour.html>. Our welcome reception in Cairo will be the evening of September 24th with a Nile Cruise Dinner and entertainment and our last day will be at one of the 7 wonders of the world ([Pyramids of Giza](#)). ONTA 2023 provides you an amazing opportunity to explore and enjoy one of the world's top tourist destinations. Please visit the webpage and contact us if you have questions about the meeting or about travel arrangements. We hope to see many of you in September.



Fig. 5. Ernesto San-Blas.

Dear colleagues and friends of ONTA

The clock is ticking to meet again, this time in Cairo to participate in the 53rd meeting of our organization. As always, the meeting will provide an invaluable opportunity to meet again, share knowledge and also enjoy the social program. The scientific program will include symposiums, oral sessions, a field day,

and our traditional student poster competition. For this reason, I want to reiterate my invitation to register and send your abstracts as soon as possible.

Additionally, I want to inform you of the entomopathogenic nematodes congress that will be held in 2024 to commemorate the centenary of the first description of the entomopathogenic nematode *Steinernema kraussei* by Götthold Steiner in 1923. The congress will take place in Logroño, Spain from 10-12 April, 2024. It is organized by Dr Raquel Campos-Herrera. For more information visit the page <https://www.icvv.es/english/eptn>

Finally, I want to thank all colleagues who are participating in the organization of the ONTA meeting and I hope to see you in September.

Sincerely

Ernesto San Blas
ONTA's Vice-President (Fig. 5)

FROM ONTA'S VICE-PRESIDENT ELECT

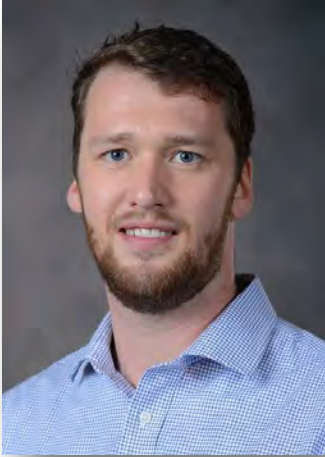


Fig. 6. Tristan Watson.

Dear Members and Colleagues,

Greetings from the Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America (ONTA). We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and high spirits. We are thrilled to announce our upcoming annual meeting, which promises to be an enriching experience for all attendees.

After a long hiatus due to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are excited to reunite and celebrate our shared passion for nematology. The ONTA annual meeting will be held jointly with the Egyptian Society for Agro-Nematology annual meeting, creating a dynamic platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange. This year's meeting will feature a captivating scientific program including cutting-edge research presentations, interactive workshops, poster sessions, industry exhibits and numerous networking opportunities.

Join us in Cairo, Egypt, from 24th to 29th September 2023, as we reconnect, learn, and propel the field of nematology forward. Let us come together and reignite the spirit of collaboration and discovery that defines our community. We look forward to welcoming you at the ONTA 53rd Annual Meeting!

Warm regards,

Tristan Watson,

ONTA Vice-President Elect (Fig. 6)

Treasurer Report April 2022-December 2022

Gainesville FL, Mar. 8, 2023



Fig. 7. Renato Inserra.

Dear Colleagues:

For financial clarity, I prepared this short report for the transactions occurred in 2022, before ONTA became involved with incoming contributions and expenses relating to the 2023 annual meeting in Egypt.

I provide in Table 1 a tabulated account of deposits received, and expenses incurred by ONTA from 17 April 2022 to 31 December 2022. Deposits were divided in different categories including regular and sustaining member dues and other payments related to ONTA activities.

ONTA FL, Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c) (3) organization that operates for scientific and educational purposes. However, a tax return and a corporation report must be filed each year. I filed electronically the federal return for 2022 and the corporation report for the state of Florida for 2023.

In the eight months of 2022 covered by this report, ONTA's income decreased by **US \$379.78**. Membership dues collected were US \$1022.46 compared to US \$4,741.27 in the previous report 2021-2022 that encompassed 14 months. The cost for formatting and posting *Nematropica* vol. 52 was like that of vol. 51.

I would like to mention that Dr. Luis Payan (SYNGENTA) has provided consistently his sustaining member contributions, US \$1,000 for 2022. His generosity is commendable and greatly appreciated.

Available funds for the organization amount to **US \$39,915.50** compared to **US \$40,295.28** in the previous year.

The efforts of Larry Duncan, Julia Meredith and Deb Neher in adjusting ONTA's website, calling for membership dues and keeping records are greatly appreciated. I thank them for their valuable time, detailed work, dedication, and loyalty to ONTA.

ONTA's financial status is solid as it enters 2023.

Please contact me if you need more explanation concerning this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Renato Inserra,
ONTA Treasurer

FROM ONTA'S OFFICERS

Table 1. Tabulated Treasurer's Report April 2022- December 2022

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Balance Previous Year, 2021-2022 | US \$40,295.28 |
| DEPOSITS RECEIVED | |
| Member dues | US \$1,022.46 |
| Sustaining member dues | |
| Syngenta (Dr Luis Payan 9/9/22) | US \$1,000.00 |
| TOTAL DEPOSITS | US \$2,022.46 |
| EXPENSES INCURRED | |
| <i>Nematropica</i> | |
| Vol. 52 (1) 2022 (Partial) | US \$480.00 |
| Vol. 52 (1) 2022 | US \$315.00 |
| Vol. 52 (2) 2022 | US \$408.00 |
| Vol. 52 (2) 2022 | US \$687.00 |
| Secretarial Expenses (Computer updates, cartridges) | US \$350.85 |
| HostGator (Domain registration) | US \$17.99 |
| HostGator (Shared hosting) | US \$143.40 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | US \$2,402.24 |
| BALANCE Dec. 31, 2022 | <u>US \$39,915.50</u> |

Balance reflects US \$379.78 decrease over last year's funds of US \$40,295.28.

Renato Inserra,

ONTA Treasurer



Fig. 8. Rosa H. Manzanilla-López (ONTA Annual Meeting, Peru, 2018).

Dear ONTA members,

It is again a pleasure to be with you and share news sent to the ONTA Newsletter by our ONTA community and nematology friends from other nematology sister organizations (ENS, AAB). As we are approaching the date for our 53rd Annual meeting in Cairo, Egypt, from 24th – 29th September (2023) to be held in collaboration with the Egyptian Society of Agricultural Nematology (ESAN), we cordially invite you to join ONTA on this special meeting. Although it is not the first time that ONTA has held annual meetings outside the Americas, it the first time that ONTA will hold an annual meeting in the Middle East. This will be a unique opportunity to interact with nematologists from North Africa and Middle East, and we are very pleased to share with you in

this issue the organization highlights in preparation to the LIII Annual Meeting of ONTA.

Dr Fahiem El-Borai Kora (ONTA's President) has been very busy working with ESAN's Local Organizers Committee, ONTA's Executive and Foundation Committees to have a high quality meeting both scientifically and culturally for all delegates attending this important event. On behalf of ONTA we extend a cordial invitation to graduate students to register as soon as possible and participate in the Rodrigo Rodríguez-Kábana best poster competition and the ONTA Foundation travel Awards

We greatly appreciate the Newsletter contributions that were sent for this issue by colleagues, and warmly welcome the contribution by **Inge Dehennin** and **Dora Scott** from the **Nematology Coordination Office at Ghent University (Belgium)** about the **Second Pan-African Nematology Workshop (PANEMA)**, which was hosted in March 2023 in South Africa by **the University of Mpumalanga (UMP)**.

We are very pleased to use the opportunity not only to congratulate colleagues on their retirement (Mayra Rodríguez) but also to celebrate and welcome early career colleagues who just earned their PhD (Ana Lozano-Soria). We also pay special homage to **Dr Alejandro Ayala** (one of the ONTA fathers) and to our Spanish former ONTA members, colleagues and friends Maria Arias-Delgado and Miguel Escuer who passed away this year.

We will be looking forward to meeting you in Cairo soon.

Kind regards,

Rosa

Second Pan-African Nematology Network workshop takes place in South Africa



We warmly welcome the second **special contribution to the ONTA Newsletter**, which was kindly submitted by **Inge Dehennin** and **Dora Scott** (Fig. 9) from the **Nematology Coordination Office at Ghent University (Belgium)**. On this occasion Inge and Dora share with us the news about the **2nd Pan-African nematology workshop**, which was held and hosted in March 2023 in South Africa by the **University of Mpumalanga (UMP)**.



Fig. 9. Dora Scott (left) and Inge Dehennin (right) in Mbombela (South Africa).

Second Pan-African Nematology Network workshop takes place in South Africa

Recently, the **University of Mpumalanga (UMP)** in South Africa hosted the **second Pan-African Nematology Network workshop (PANEMA)**. This international three-day event, co-sponsored by Syngenta, was a South African partnership between UMP, North-West University (NWU) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and took place from 1 to 3 March 2023 at the UMP Mbombela Campus. It was attended by more than 120 participants from 8 different African countries, bringing together agricultural extension workers and local farmers, early-career researchers, academics, students, government officials and representatives, as well as attendees from Europe and North America. By bringing together such a diverse audience, participants could share good educational practices, create and strengthen networks between their higher education institutes and benefit from additional educational opportunities.

Second Pan-African Nematology Network workshop (cont.)



Fig. 10. PANEMA workshop group.

PANEMA was established by the NEMEDUSSA project (Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education: Nematology Education in Sub-Saharan Africa), which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and VLIR-UOS from Belgium. The NEMEDUSSA project aims to increase awareness of and education on nematodes in Africa. PANEMA aims to promote networking and academic exchange between nematologists working on the continent, by hosting events such as the PANEMA workshops.

Taking a different approach, the PANEMA workshops focus primarily on training, networking and bringing together different stakeholders in the context of nematology. The first PANEMA workshop, held in Kenya in 2022 (see ONTA Newsletter vol. 52:2), laid the foundation for the event in South Africa in 2023. The second PANEMA workshop, building on that success, strived to have a good balance between seminars, interactive discussions and hands-on practice in the field and laboratory (Fig 10.). The balance was achieved by offering targeted training sessions on nematode-related topics, allowing attendees to select their preferred training (Fig. 11). Sessions held in the UMP campus laboratories on the identification of different nematodes and specialized microscopy work, were very popular. An expert market included booths (Fig. 12) hosted by experienced nematologists, which gave attendees the opportunity to engage with experts on relevant topics, as well as others working in agriculture facing nematode problems. The smaller groups and direct interaction and feedback were particularly well received.

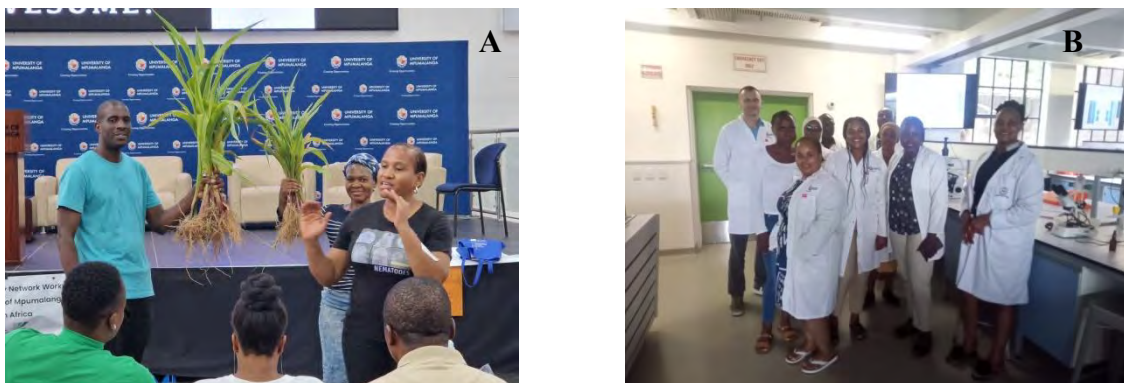


Fig. 11. PANEMA workshop. From left to right A: ARC colleagues Itana Guga, Rachel Mohlala and Dr Nancy Ntidi give a demonstration to farmers; B: Prof. Wim Bert (UGent) with participants at the University of Mpumalanga(UMP) laboratory during a specialized training on nematode identification.

Second Pan-African Nematology Network workshop (cont.)

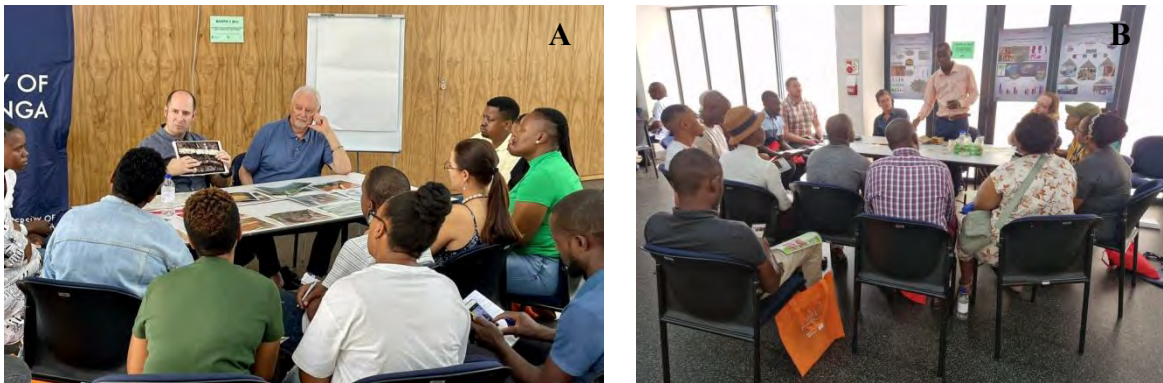


Fig. 12. From left to right A: Matthew Back and Richard Sikora at 'expert booth' on nematode interactions (courtesy Ed Sikora); B: NemAfrica team on 'Nematode Management'.

The common theme during this workshop was scientific communication for better nematode awareness. This included specialized training by 'The Floor is Yours', who conducted sessions on effective presentation skills. Their innovative approach favors a clear message that is accessible to a diverse audience, which is often lacking in scientific communication. At the end of the workshop, students and academics who followed the training could not only showcase their improved poster and presentation skills, but also use the opportunity to engage with a broad audience on their research.

Plenary sessions included discussions on the enabling of sustainable crop production, the status of nematology across the education, extension and private sectors, and food security in Africa. An interactive session on nematology in agricultural extension was particularly appreciated by farmers and extension workers alike, as it showed them the value of collaborating with nematologists in increasing crop yield (Fig. 13).

The positive responses to the workshop illustrate the value of more specialized training and focused events for those working with nematodes in Africa. **The next PANEMA workshop is planned for 2024 and will be held in Benin.** Additional sponsorship and attendance of an international public is welcomed, so that a wide audience can be reached and nematology can be further embedded on the continent. To participate in the next workshop or collaborate with PANEMA, please contact nemedussa@ugent.be. More information on the next workshop will be made available soon, on the website: www.nemedussa.ugent.be.



Fig. 13. A: Prof. Zakheleni Dube (UMP) and Prof. Drekie Fourie (NWU) engaging the audience on the current station of nematology research; B: local organizing team and students planting a tree on UMP campus to commemorate the workshop and knowledge shared.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Dr Mayra Rodríguez-Hernández on her retirement

Dr Mayra Guadalupe Rodríguez-Hernández (Fig. 14) has been a member of ONTA for almost 20 years and participated in the organization of two ONTA Annual Meetings in Varadero, Cuba (2001 and 2015). She graduated as an Agricultural Engineer, specializing in Plant Health at the Agrarian University of Havana, Cuba in 1984. She received Agricultural Nematology training in Cuba and in Mexico at Colegio de Postgraduados (1993) by Dr Carlos Sosa Moss and Dr Victor Heber Aguilar Rincón, and years later also at the UK under the supervision of Dr Brian Kerry and support from Dr Ken Evans and Mrs Janet Rowe. She earned her PhD with honors in 2000 (Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de las Villas, Cuba) and as a coordinator of national and international projects she made working stays with farmers and specialists in Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador and other countries. She has authored and edited many nematology articles, book chapters and books, and has been speaker at nematology meetings and conferences in Cuba and other countries.

After 39 years of working in the Nematology Laboratory of the National Center for Agricultural Health, she retired on 1st February 2023 but was rehired in April to allow her to continue as Editor-in-Chief of the *Plant Protection Journal*, conclude one research project and supervise PhD students, among other tasks.

Mayra has received many national awards, including the “Cuban Education” and the “Carlos J Finlay” Orders, the latter being the highest rank award for researchers. This year on May 12 (International Plant Health Day), the Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forestry Technicians (ACTAF) of the Republic of Cuba awarded Mayra the **Work of Life ACTAF Award** for her contributions to the agricultural development of the country, and her work to strengthening the science of Nematology in Cuba and training of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Mayra recently coordinated a session entitled “**Soil health for healthy plants: relation of basic domains for the ecosystem**”, which was held at the IV International Seminar on Agricultural Health (SISA), Varadero, Cuba (8-12 May 2023) with participation of speakers from Cuba, Spain, Argentina and the USA. Outputs included the signing of a letter of intention between CENSA and Dr Deborah Neher (Figs 14-15) to carry out joint activities for the training of new generations of nematologists. Other meetings were also held with directors and specialists from the Institute of Soils and the Center for the Protection and Hygiene of Radiation (Cuba) to elaborate a joint project on soil health, which will include aspects relevant to agricultural nematology in Cuba. Mayra has said that ‘**regardless of her age (62 years old) and health problems, she plans to continue helping in nematology**’.



Fig. 14. A: From left to right: Dr Daine Hernández (Mayra’s former student and head of the CENSA Nematology Lab); B: Dr Deb (left) and Mayra (right) signing a collaboration letter of intention.

CONGRATULATIONS (cont.)



Fig. 15. CENSA and ONTA members at SISA. From left to right: Dr Leopoldo Hidalgo-Díaz (now at Biotor Labs, Nicaragua), Mr Roberto Enrique (an specialist who has worked in Nematology with Mayra for 39 years), Drs Mayra, Deborah, Daine, Emilio Fernández and Ivan Castro-Lizazo (a former student of the late Antonio Bello in Spain).

CONGRATULATIONS



Fig. 16. Pat McCaugh (left) and Saroj Mankau(right). Image courtesy of Saroj.

“Scientist, philanthropist Saroj Mankau supports educational opportunities for women, girls around the world” (12 April 2023, News, Voices of Justice) that she gave to Pat McCaugh (Fig. 16). The full interview can be accessed at: at:

<https://diocesela.org/news/scientist-philanthropist-saroj-mankau/>

We would like to congratulate our ONTA friend Saroj Mankau, an inspiring figure to many of us for the interview entitled:

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Dr Ana Lozano-Soria!

Ana Lozano Soria's viva took place on 10th March 2023 at the Sala de Juntas de la Facultad de Derecho of the University of Alicante (Spain). Ana successfully defended the Doctoral Thesis "Biocontrol fungi, volatile organic compounds and chitosan for banana pest sustainable management". The thesis was directed by Drs Luis Vicente Lopez-Llorca and Federico López-Moya and the examination tribunal (Fig. 17) was integrated by Dr José Manuel Llorens Climent (President), Dr Carmen Gómez-Lamas (Secretary) and Dr George Littlejohn (Vocal). Ana presented the results of her PhD research on the interactions of fungal volatile compounds (VOC) derived from entomopathogenic and nematophagous fungi activity against the banana weevil (BW), *Cosmopolites sordidus*, for its control and management in the field as a stimulant and plant protector against pests and pathogens such as *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense*. Her research provided evidence that VOCs from biocontrol fungi are repellents of BW that can be used in banana fields using push & pull strategies for the sustainable management of the pest, and that chitosan (a polymer with antimicrobial activity to other *Fusarium* wilt pathogens) can be used in irrigation to prime banana defenses at local and systemically levels thus having potential as a strategy against the current banana pandemic caused by FocTR4. Chitosan also showed capacity to induce banana growth regulators and the induction of SAR compounds; VOCs and chitosan could help to reduce the use of toxic compounds in banana plantations worldwide (see Lozano-Soria *et al.*, 2020).

Lozano-Soria, A., Picciotti, U., Lopez-Moya, F., Lopez-Cepero, J., Porcelli, F. and Lopez-Llorca, L.V. (2020). Volatile organic compounds from entomopathogenic and nematophagous fungi repel banana black weevil (*Cosmopolites sordidus*). *Insects* **11**(8): 509. <https://doi.org/10.3390/insects11080509>



Fig. 17. A: Examination tribunal. From left to right: Drs Federico López-Moya, George Littlejohn, José Manuel Llorens Climent, Ana Lozano Soria, Carmen Gómez-Lamas and Luis Lopez-Llorca; B: Ana's student colleagues.

Spain: Review of the First Meeting of Spanish Nematologists**Sara Sánchez-Moreno and Miguel Talavera-Rubia**

On 14 December 2022, the First Meeting of Nematologists was held at the National Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Technology (INIA-CSIC, Madrid, Spain). The event brought together more than 40 professionals in the field of Nematology from 22 research centers, universities, companies and Plant Health Services in Spain (Fig. 18). Some twenty papers were presented on the most current topics of basic and applied research in Nematology carried out in Spain, such as the biodiversity of marine and terrestrial nematodes, biological control, biofumigation, plant-nematode interactions, tools molecular diseases, plant resistance, entomopathogenic nematodes or the effect of climate change on the functions of nematodes in agroecosystems.

Early-career researchers who are beginning their scientific career received special attention and presented their interesting

and innovative lines of work. The day concluded with a debate on the need to support and strengthen Nematology as a scientific discipline in Spain. During the debate, the great harmony that exists in our scientific community was revealed, the extensive synergies and interactions that occur between the different research groups, and the need to repeat this meeting in the future, which will be held in autumn 2023 at the University of Alicante, sponsored by Drs. Federico López-Moya and Luis Vicente López-Llorca and where the first steps will be taken to establish the Spanish Society of Nematologists.

As Organizers of the next Symposium of the European Nematology Society, the meeting also served as a starting point for the preparation work for said event that will be held in Córdoba (Spain) from 15 to 19 April 2024.



Fig. 18. The Spanish Nematologists group who gathered at the National Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Technology (INIA-CSIC, Madrid, Spain).

Georgia: About our Meeting ‘Advances in Nematology in London’

Nona Mikaia

The **one-day annual nematology meeting** ‘Advances in Nematology’ of the Association of Applied Biologists (UK) took place at the traditional venue of Burlington House of the Linnean Society, Piccadilly, London, on the 8th December, 2022 (Fig. 19). The meeting was held as a one-day Hybrid event hosted online. The meeting was attended by delegates and speakers from many different areas of nematology such as biology, ecology, epidemiology, management of plant-parasitic nematodes (PPN), entomopathogenic nematodes and diagnostic methods. The meeting had the participation of delegates from Australia, Georgia, Ghana, India, Ireland and UK, early-career young scientist (who gave oral presentations) and students who participated in the preferred student ‘normal’ presentation (Brian Kerry prize) and the student short-talk prize competition.

Steve Edgington (CABI International, UK) chaired the morning session, which kicked off with a talk on “**Microbial role in suppression and protection of plant-parasitic nematodes**” by invited speaker **Olivera Topalovic (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)**. The invited speaker for the afternoon session was **Dr Maria L. Inácio (National Institute for Agriculture and Veterinary Research (INIAV), Portugal)** who gave the talk “**Pinewood nematode: A quarantine perspective of more than 20 years’ presence in Portugal**”. Fourteen short presentations of 15 minutes each were given through the morning and afternoon sessions that included topics dealing with PCN such as PCN management for potato industry, the *Arabidopsis thaliana* high-throughput phenotyping approach to PPN, PCN hatching mechanisms, PCN potato resistance, novel volatile compounds for PCN suppression. Strategies for other PPN management included novel nematode surface coat-associated proteins, cinnamon extracts and chitosan against root-knot nematode, *Meloidogyne incognita* RNAseq analysis, nematophagous fungus *Esteya* spp. pathogenicity against *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*, ‘Wrap and Plant’ technology for PPN in yam management, *Bacillus* spp. secondary metabolites, and also tick mortality caused by entomopathogenic nematodes. Before adjourning the meeting Steve thanked delegates for attending the “Advances in Nematology” meeting and wished all: “see each other again next year”. The meeting was adjourned at 16:45.



Fig. 19: From left to right: Keith Davies, Matthew Back, Nona Mikaia and Irina Khelisupali.

Costa Rica: Amazed at the Beauty of the University of Coimbra, Portugal

Prof. Luis Pocasangre-Enamorado



Fig. 20: Coimbra (Portugal).

Without a doubt, the Mecca of the history of Universities is the European Continent. The first University founded in Europe was that of Bologna (Italy), the second one was the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium and afterwards many more followed in the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Portugal. A few weeks ago I was lucky enough to visit the University of Coimbra in Portugal (Figs 20-21), which has been operating in the same

building where it was founded for more than 700 years. The old building has an extraordinary architectural beauty and, due to that great beauty, UNESCO declared the campus of the University of Coimbra as a World Heritage Site. Likewise, I was lucky enough to visit my colleagues: Prof. Isabel Abrantes and Dr Ivania Gralina from the Phytopathology-Nematology Department of the University. I had also the opportunity to give a seminar on nematode management. The cherry on the cake of this visit was to have the privilege and great pleasure of meeting my former EARTH student, Joaquim Cuvaca from Mozambique, a MasterCard-MCF-EARTH Foundation former scholarship holder who is doing his PhD at the University of Coimbra and of whom I am very proud. I take advantage of sending this note to the ONTA Newsletter to post some photographs of the extraordinary campus of the University of Coimbra, which is deservedly a World Heritage Site. In short, I was dazzled by the beauty of the University campus.



Fig. 21. Campus of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, UNESCO World Heritage Site. A: Bell Tower; B: Library; C: Rectory building; D (from left to right): Prof. Isabel Abrantes, Dr Ivânia Esteves and Joaquim Cuvaca (former MCF-EARTH fellow).

Spain: International Congress 100th Anniversary EPN Description

Raquel Campos-Herrera



Fig. 22. Raquel Campos-Herrera

We are delighted to announce the upcoming congress commemorating the **100th anniversary of the first description of the entomopathogenic nematode *Steinernema kraussei* by Götthold Steiner in 1923 (Steiner, 1923)**. This event will be a unique opportunity to celebrate a century of scientific achievements in the field of nematology and entomology. Join us in celebrating the centenary of the discovery of *Steinernema kraussei* and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and solutions for sustainable agriculture and pest management.

The congress will be held in Logroño (Spain) from **Wednesday 10th April, 2024 until Friday 12th of April, 2024**. Organized

by **Raquel Campos-Herrera** (Fig. 22), this event will take place immediately before the 2024 meeting of the European Society of Nematologists (www.esn-online.org[1]) in Cordoba, providing participants with an opportunity to attend both events and maximize their knowledge and networking experiences. We will bring together renowned experts, researchers, and students from around the world to discuss the latest findings, innovations, and challenges related to entomopathogenic nematodes. Symposia will be organized to include competent experts in the field to summarize existing knowledge and provide valuable insights and perspectives on the history, evolution, and future of nematode research. Poster presentations, workshops and networking opportunities will allow participants to engage with their peers and learn from the best in the field. We look forward to welcoming you to the congress and experiencing an unforgettable celebration of a century of nematology and entomology.

More Information:

[HTTPS://WWW.ICVV.ES/ENGLISH/EPN](https://www.icvv.es/english/epn)

Reference

Steiner, G. (1923) *Aplectana kraussei* n.sp., eine in der Blattwespe *Lyda* sp. parasitierende Nematodenform, nebst Bemerkungen über das Seitenorgan der parasitischen Nematoden. Zentralblatt für Bakteriologie, Parasitenkunde, Infektionskrankheiten und Hygiene, *Zweite Abteilung* **59**, 14-18.

In memory of Domingo Alejandro Ayala

Domingo Alejandro Ayala (1934-2022), one of the Founding Father of ONTA, passed away on 20 December 2022, in Puerto Rico.



Fig. 23. Domingo Alejandro Ayala

Domingo Alejandro Ayala (Fig. 23) was born in San German (Puerto Rico) on 30 September, 1934. He obtained a BSc from the Inter-American University of San German (1955), a MSc (1958) from the Catholic University of America in Washington DC, and a PhD (1965) at the University of California (Davis, USA). He served at the Agricultural Experiment Station (EEA) as a research assistant, assistant nematologist, associate nematologist and nematologist, he was Director of the Crop Protection Department from 1972-1976. He held the position of Dean and Director of the College of Agricultural Sciences (CCA) from 1979-1985. Dr Alejandro Ayala was the first Dean and Director of the CCA. Importantly, the Dean of the CCA is also Director of the EEA and Director of the Agricultural Extension Service. Alejandro was Emeritus Professor of the Department of Plant Protection, University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez Campus.

Recognition of Founding Fathers of ONTA

Alejandro Ayala and Jessé Román (Fig. 24) conceived the idea to establish The Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America (ONTA) with the initial aim of fostering cooperation between nematologists in Latin America and those in the USA. Their idea became a reality during a meeting that was held on December 2, 1967 at the Excelsior Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Participants at the meeting were nine scientists from five countries: A. Ayala, J. Román, R. Chevres-Román and L. F. Martorell of Puerto Rico; R. Barriga Olivares, Colombia; G. Blair, Trinidad; J. Edmunds, St. Lucia; J. A. Winchester and A. C. Tarjan, USA. The group elected a board of directors and A. C. Tarjan, University of Florida, USA, was chosen to serve as the first president. The Organization was incorporated at first in Puerto Rico with the name of OTAN (Organization of Tropical American Nematologists). The first scientific meeting of the Organization was held during November 1968 in Sarasota, Florida with the participation of 44 members from 10 countries. In its second year the society had 105 members in 19 countries. In the following years the name of the Organization was changed to ONTA (Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America) for uniformity in the acronym in both the English and Spanish languages. The subsequent and continuous contribution provided by A. C. Tarjan and Rodrigo Rodríguez-Kábana in promoting ONTA's scientific activity and cohesiveness played a pivotal role in enabling this emerging society to obtain internationally scientific recognition.

In memory of Domingo Alejandro Ayala (cont.)

The scope of the organization has been broadened over the years to include individuals with interests in free-living and insect-parasitic nematodes. Nowadays, ONTA has over 250 members worldwide representing over 45 countries, and these include university scientists, national governmental nematologists, and private sector companies and their employees. ONTA was subsequently incorporated as a tax-exempt corporation in Florida in 2008, with the new name Organization of Nematologists of Tropical America FL, Inc. (ONTA). The incorporation in Florida has provided an action base for the organization. It has also strengthened its operational framework by facilitating the execution of the scientific activities planned by the organization [<http://www.ontaweb.org/what-is-onta/>]. In the late 1990s, Jim Rich, University of Florida, established the ONTA Foundation in order to promote scientific and educational activity in nematology in tropical countries. The ONTA Foundation was granted full status as a public charity in the USA in 2015. ONTA members express their gratitude to these two Founding Fathers of the organization for their vision, far-seeing planning and determination in realizing their original idea.



Fig. 24. Funding fathers of ONTA: Jessé Román (left) and Alejandro Ayala (right); B: Honors and Awards Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of ONTA. From left to right: Nahum Marbán-Mendoza, Alejandro Ayala, Ignacio Cid del Prado-Vera and Jessé Román.

Obituary prepared with contributions by Drs Renato Inserra, Julia Meredith and Roberto Vargas.

**María Arias Delgado:
a life dedicated to study
of the nematodes
and the agrarian systems of Spain**



Fig. 25. Dr María Arias Delgado

Dr María Arias Delgado (Fig. 25), Degree in Pharmacy from the Complutense University of Madrid, belonged to the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), specialist in Nematology, passed away on 5 March, 2023. As an Assistant professor of Parasitology, she was led hand in hand with her thesis director Professor Jiménez Millán to begin her studies in a new discipline in Spain, until then only studied by Professor Gadea, on edaphic and freshwater nematodes. Her career began at the Spanish Institute of Entomology, of the CSIC, at the end of the sixties, of which she was vice-director from 1980 to 1985 and in which she worked as a Scientific Researcher until her retirement in 2001.

Her dedication to the taxonomy of nematodes led her to describe a new genus (*Paratrophurus* Arias, 1970) and several new species of nematodes. She acquired a deep taxonomic knowledge that she later focused on the nematodes of the Longidoridae and Trichodoridae. She made an extraordinary collection of specimens obtained in surveys of the soils of Spain, which today is deposited in the National Museum of Natural Sciences (MNCN) in Madrid of the CSIC; as well as a cataloguing phytoparasitic nematodes in cereals, potatoes, beets, tomatoes, citrus, fruit trees, vineyards and forest species.

Virus-transmitting nematodes in the vine occupied an important part of her scientific work, in addition to studies on ecology and edaphic biodiversity, as well as the role of nematodes as indicators of the state of soil conservation. She reviewed the Criconematoidea in the Iberian Peninsula, improved a computerized procedure for the identification of nematode species, and pointed out the usefulness of biofumigation as an alternative biological procedure to the use of industrially synthesized nematicides. Her taxonomic studies on soil nematodes, together with other members of her team at the Institute of Agricultural Sciences (ICA) of the CSIC, have served to lay the foundations of nematology with phytosanitary interest in Spain.

Her academic training was completed with stays scheduled by the CSIC in various European research centers specializing in Nematology: Nematology Laboratory of the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Wageningen (Holland), various courses at the Agricultural Nematology Laboratory of Bari (Italy), Oeiras Experimental Agricultural Station (Portugal), Department of Zoology of the University of Coimbra (Portugal), and carried out taxonomic work at the Institute of Animal Evolution and Ecology and Institute of Parasitology of Moscow State University and the National Museum of History Natural of France.

Obituary (cont.)

She was a founding member of the Spanish Society of Phytopathology (SEF), of which she was secretary, from 1980 to 1984. She has been a member of the Spanish Society of Soil Science and of the European Society of Nematologists (ESN), of which she was president from 2000 to 2002 and was part of the committees: "European Survey of Plant Parasitic Nematodes" (European Science Foundation) and, for four years, of the "Scientific Board" (European Society of Nematologists) for five years.

She always knew how to maintain the teamwork. She was a teacher for a generation of Spanish nematologists who continue their work at the ICA-CSIC, at the MNCN-CSIC and at the Marchamalo Agricultural Research Laboratory (Guadalajara, Spain). Science loses a great researcher with extensive scientific activity. Her family and friends lose an endearing and noble human being. Our job now must be to share her legacy and continue it.

Obituary prepared by Antonio López-Pérez, Susana Cobacho Arcos, Rosa González López, Alfonso Navas

In memory of nematologist Dr Miguel Escuer Cazador

Dr Miguel Escuer Cazador, specialist in Nematology, passed away on 18 March 2023



Fig. 26. Miguel Escuer Cazador

Dr Miguel Escuer Cazador (Fig. 26) completed his doctorate with his own resources, setting up a small laboratory in his home, allowing him to extract, fix, and mount microscopic preparations for his study. Later he moved to Madrid, where he was hired by the Department of Agroecology, belonging to the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), working with Professor Antonio Bello and Dr María Arias.

From then on, his passion for nematology grew and he developed a wide scientific career. Although he specialized in nematodes of the Criconematidae, he was also interested in free soil nematodes and other groups of phytoparasites. He continued to develop his career at the Institute of Agrarian Sciences (ICA, CSIC) working with Dr Carmen Gutiérrez, who became a partner in his last jobs, and with whom he made a wonderful friendship.

The legacy of his professional career is made up of a collection of specimens of nematodes obtained in surveys of the soils of Spain, which today is deposited in the National Museum of Natural Sciences (MNCN) of Madrid of the CSIC. Our task now must be to share his legacy and give it continuity to expand scientific knowledge.

Miguel shared his dedication to scientific activity by traveling to places with unique landscapes, enjoying open environments far from big cities, taking hiking routes that he documented with magnificent photographs, as a great expert on the subject and an excellent reporter. Another of his great hobbies was classical music, where perhaps because of his calm character he found serenity.

Nematology loses one of the great taxonomists and phytopathologists worldwide, with extensive scientific activity and great knowledge of the agricultural systems of Spain, as well as an excellent person of great human quality.

Obituary prepared by Antonio López-Pérez, Rosa González-López, Susana C. Arcos

We thank **Dr Jose Antonio López-Pérez** (Centro de investigación apícola y agroambiental Marchamalo, Instituto Regional Investigación y Desarrollo Agroalimentario y Forestal (IRIAF), Spain) for his support in sharing with the ONTA Newsletter the obituaries of Dr María Arias and Dr Miguel Escuer.



Fig. 27. 50th ONTA Annual Meeting in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico (2017). From left to right: Biodum Claudius-Cole, Erwin Aballay and Fabio Chaverri.



Fig. 28. 50th ONTA Annual Meeting in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico (2017). From left to right: Gladys Munera, Renato Inserra, Julia Meredith and Deb Neher.

Get ready and make a note on your diary!

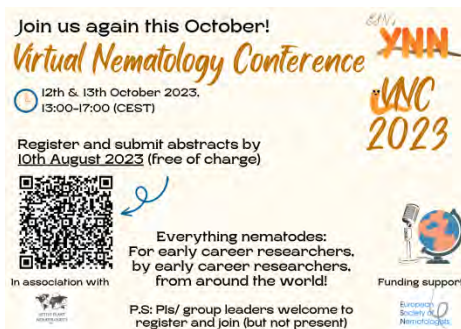


Fig. 29. Virtual Nematology Conference.



Fig. 30. EPN's 100 Anniversary.
(Image courtesy by Raquel Campos-Herrera)

ESN events 2023-2024

- **XV NEMATOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM “Various aspects of the study of nematodes and other Ecdysozoa”** with international participation. **Moscow, 23-25 August 2023.**
- **Virtual Nematology Conference (VNC).** This year will be the **second edition of the VNC.** The event will be held on line from **12-13 October 2023**, in the afternoons, and is entirely dedicated to **early career Nematologists** (MSc, PhD and Postdoc). This is a great opportunity for them to present their work.
- **100th anniversary of the first description of the entomopathogenic nematode *Steinernema kraussei*** by Götthold Steiner in 1923 (Steiner, 1923). The congress will be held in **Logroño (Spain)** from **Wednesday 10th April, 2024 until Friday 12th of April, 2024.** Event organized by Raquel Campos-Herrera. More Information: [HTTPS://WWW.ICVV.ES/ENGLISH/EPN](https://www.icvv.es/english/epn)

35th Symposium of the European Society of Nematologists



- The **35th Symposium of the European Society of Nematologists** will be held in the «Palacio de Congresos» in **Cordoba (Spain)**, from **15-19 April 2024.** Information and registration are open at <https://esn24cordoba.com/>

Fig. 31. Cordoba, Spain.

AAB

- ‘**Advances in Nematology 2023**’ will take place as a single-day hybrid event on **Thursday December 7th** hosted online and at **The Linnean Society in central London (Fig. 28)**. This event is hosted by the **Association of Applied Biologists [Nematology Specialist Group](#)** and invites contributions from areas encompassing all the applied biology of nematology (molecular biology of nematodes or hosts, ecology, epidemiology, management of plant-parasitic nematodes, entomopathogenic nematodes and emerging diagnostic methods).



Fig. 32. A: Burlington House (London); B: Linnean Society meeting room.



payment; 3) wire transfer. Janete Brito and Renato Inserra have full codes for wiring if requested.

Please give generously to support the activities and projects of the ONTA Foundation.

Get busy! ONTA Foundation, Inc. status is clear and high. Open your wings and take a flight!

Dear ONTA member,

ONTA Foundation is ready for a campaign to request donations and expand its contributor base in a big way. ONTA Foundation can receive funds through several means: 1) checks made out to the ONTA Foundation and mailed to Janete Brito (Fig. 33); 2) credit card, same information required as for membership



Fig. 33. Janete Brito.



Dear ONTA Member,

A list of active members with their e-mail addresses and countries has been posted on the ONTA website (<http://www.ontaweb.org/onta-membership-directory/>). Please verify your membership status on the posted list. Contact Julia Meredith (jmeredith@cox.net) if your membership status is not updated.

Thanks,

Julia Meredith
ONTA Acting Secretary



Fig. 34. Julia Meredith.

ONTA NEWSLETTER INVITATION

Dear ONTA member,

Do you have a passion for nematodes and nematology? Would you like to share nematology news and pictures with our ONTA members? If so, welcome aboard!

We would like to extend to you a warm invitation to send or share information for our next ONTA Newsletter issue.

Please contact us. We are looking forward to hearing from you and to learn about your local nematology events and news.

Thanks,

Rosa (ONTA Newsletter editor)



Fig. 35. Rosa H. Manzanilla-López.

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The ONTA Newsletter editor would like to thank all ONTA Newsletter contributors for sending and sharing information and images through January-June 2023.

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