

Report on the 4th International Symposium on Weeds and Invasive Plants in Montpellier, May 18-23 2014

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170 participants from 33 countries (representing all continents) were cordially welcomed by Guillaume Fried and his organizing team at SupAgro Montpellier, located on the south coast of France on the Mediterranean Sea. Montpellier became the capital of botanical science in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. Nowadays, Montpellier and the surrounding region are hosts to many different research teams working in the areas of agronomy, biodiversity, ecology and biological control and which belong to a variety of French and foreign research agencies (INRA, Cirad, Anses, USDA, Csiro, IRD, ...). Montpellier SupAgro (INRA) it is today 1669 students, 88 teacher-researchers and 321 staff members. It offers a full range of training courses from Bachelor (professional) degree to PhD, as well as several excellent engineer training curricula. Its main purpose is initial and continuing training, research, international scientific and technical cooperation, and development represent the main missions.

Agriculture, food, environment and rural territories are at the heart of its concerns: Its significant ambition is to train actors who will participate in designing and implementing the new agricultural revolution in order to: feed the planet, manage sustainable resources and territories. The institute is deliberately open to international education: 25 % of the students are foreigners (50% out of PhD students). The institute offers training courses specifically dedicated to Mediterranean and Tropical issues.

The 4th International Symposium on Weeds and Invasive Plants was a four day meeting with 7 sessions, 89 posters and 1 excursion day: Key note speakers were Montserrat Vilà (EBD-CISC, Spain) "Ecological impacts of invasive plants", Joe Caffrey (Inland Fisheries, Ireland) "Invasive Plants in Irish Freshwaters – Impacts, Control and Management", Sébastien Lavergne (LECA, France) "Niche evolution and biological invasions", Massimo Cristofaro (ENEA, Italy) "Integrated Weed Management: the use of biological control of weeds in agricultural and natural environments", Urs Schaffner (CABI, Switzerland) "Accidental introductions of classical biological agents against invasive weeds in Europe - the ragweed leaf beetle as a case study", Vernon Heywood School of Biological Sciences Reading, UK) "Voluntary Codes of Conduct for botanic gardens and the horticultural trade to combat threats from invasive species" and Dane Panetta (Melbourne School of Land and Environment, AUS) "Weed eradication: feasibility and programme evaluation".

2 trips were offered for the excursion day: trip 1) 'Camargue and Mediterranean Coast' a guided tour of a domain including a summary of habitats in Camargue and managing actions on invasive plants as *Limonium girardianum*, *Artemisia caerulescens*, *Baccharis halminifolia*; trip 2) 'Garrigues and vineyards' a visit to Salagou Lake *Opuntia rosea*, *Lagarosiphon major* and a botanical walk in Montpeyroux its vineyards, garrigues and its Castellas (*Solanum eleagnifolium*, *Nassella tenuissima*).

EWRS has subsidized 11 young scientists:

Birnbaum Christina, Murdoch University, AUS: "Do soil microbes matter in plant invasions? A case study from Australia on five acacias and their associated soil microbial communities across non-native and native range populations"

Juarez-Escario Alejandro, University of Lleida, E: "Are irrigated crops and the surrounding riparian habitats linked by alien weeds?"

Linder Madli, Environmental Board of Estonia, EST: "The preliminary results of the

eradication efforts of alien hogweeds in Estonia”

Markova Zuzana, Charles University, CZ: “Impact of alien plants in Europe on biodiversity and socio-economy: towards a unified system used for prioritization”

Merceron Nastasia, University of Bordeaux, F: “Control of *Acer negundo*: insights from experimental and physiological studies”

Meyer Lucie, INRA, F: “New polymorphic markers for genetic diversity studies in an invasive plant : the common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)”

Souza-Alonso Pablo, University of Vigo, E: “Alterations in microbial community function and nutrient composition in ecosystems invaded by *Acacia dealbata* Link”

Stojicevic Darko, University of Belgrade, SRB: “Population Variability of Weedy Sunflower Based on Seed Morphological Traits”

Van der Colff Dewidine, University of Stellenbosch, ZA: “Drier climatic conditions may lead to increased herbivore pressure on a native tree, but not on an invasive competitor”

Widhalm Siegrid, Austrian Institute of Technology, A: “Microbial herbicides as control agents against common Ragweed”

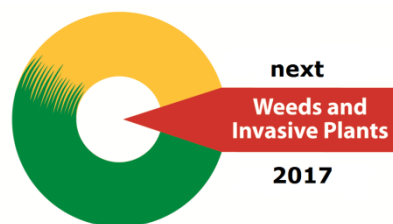
Yannelli Florentina, Technical University of Munich, D: “Preventing plant invasions during grassland restoration: resource-driven suppression by competition with small- and large-seeded seed mixtures”

We welcome these young scientists as new EWRS members.

Since the beginning of these meetings on weeds and invasive plants two EWRS working groups are involved: the invasive plants working group coordinated by Christian Bohren, Agroscope, Switzerland and the biological control of weeds working group represented by Paul Hatcher, School of Plant Sciences Reading, UK. The first Meeting was the “International Symposium Intractable Weeds and Plant Invaders” 2006 on the Azores with an important contribution on “Jumping the fenceline” – how weed scientists and conservation biologists can work together towards solving weed problems. This is the utmost concern of the Invasive Plants Working Group and the symposium is the heart of the WG.

Weeds (agricultural/environmental) and invasive plants (intractable weeds) become more and more an important subject to interdisciplinary discussions and activities. Still much work has to be done for jumping the fenceline, for describing invasive plants problems under the influence of natural and urban habitats and under the influence of cultivated land. Sharing experiences on control methods in context to a discussion on answers from human society versus plant invasions will be very important subjects in the near future.

This is just to thank Guillaume Fried and his organizing team in Montpellier for their excellent job. We look forward to the next symposium and we hope to see you 2017 in the western part of Turkey!



The circle symbolizes

the life cycle of a plant (colors of *Solidago* ssp.); the arrow stands for an effective and environmentally conscious control of weeds and invasive plants.



During the 4 days meeting in SupAgro, Montpellier 170 participants from 33 countries discussed around weeds and invasive plants.



Opuntia rosea was a problematic invasive plant until the French authorities started a rigorous eradication campaign around Lake Salagou near Montpellier.