

FARMROUND 2016 SPEAKER PROFILES



PROFESSOR HOWARD GRIFFITHS
PLANT ECOLOGY
PLANT SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

We investigate plant molecular, physiological and environmental processes which regulate productivity and CO₂ sequestration, and aim to improve the operating efficiency of the primary carboxylase, Rubisco, and match water availability to use. Stable isotope methods are used to evaluate the origins and regulation of diverse photosynthetic carbon concentrating mechanisms (CCM). These include the C₄ pathway and Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM), as well as the biophysical CCM in algae and hornworts, where our particular focus is on the molecular determinants of the chloroplast pyrenoid. Our work translates via fieldwork into food security and biomass crop productivity, as well as natural community diversity.



JANE KING
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Jane is a former Editor and Editorial Director of the Farmers Weekly Group and during her time at Farmers Weekly, Jane oversaw a complete repositioning of the title, revitalising its products, developing new services and overseeing organisational change. As a senior executive at Reed Business Information (RBI) for over 30 years, Jane also had significant experience providing information and services to a range of industries as diverse as retail, health, social care, employment law and hospitality. She joined the AHDB in February 2015 as CEO and has been involved in conducting a review of the organisation with a view to driving growth, improved competitiveness and sustainability for the industry.



GUY THALLON
HEAD OF RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION
PRODUCE WORLD GROUP

Interested in optimising the interaction between farm systems and soil systems towards achieving sustainable, resilient agricultural systems. Responsible for coordinating Innovative Farmers groups for Produce World in collaboration with Agronomy colleagues. Constantly driving to ensure that knowledge, information and data are flowing effectively from scientists to practitioners.



EMMA GARFIELD
R&D AGRONOMIST
G'S GROWERS LTD

Emma is R&D Agronomist at G's Growers Ltd, the UK's predominant grower of fresh produce field crops, with a production base both in the UK and Spain for all year round supply. Emma helps to lead the company's strategic vision for R&D and innovation; including managing the G's R&D programme for salads and allium crops. Key research areas within the G's innovation strategy reflected in the work programme include; crop protection, post-harvest, crop nutrition, crop scheduling, precision farming and soil and water research. Until recently Emma was also Head of Technical at G's Growers Ltd, leading the company's strategic vision for farm technical standards. Emma works very closely with the research community to deliver the appliance of science to G's Grower members and has previously worked as a Research Agronomist for a leading root crop farming supply company and as the Research Technical Manager for Field Vegetables and Mushrooms (AHDB Horticulture). She has a degree in Biological Sciences (Botany) and MSc in Horticulture. Emma is a Nuffield Scholar, is BASIS and FACTS qualified and has also worked as an independent vegetable agronomist, supporting applied research projects.



SACHIN SHENDE
Co-FOUNDER & CEO
KISANHUB

Sachin grew up on a farm, and combines the insights of a rural upbringing with recognised expertise in the development of data analytics and research platforms. He holds a Ph.D. in Computational Hydraulics from Loughborough University, and prior to founding KisanHub in 2012, managed the development of research analytics platforms for Barclays Global Investors and BlackRock.



PHIL HOWELL
PROGRAMME LEAD (PRE-BREEDING)
NIAB

Phil Howell (Fitzwilliam 1989) grew up in Worcestershire as the youngest of a large family riddled with links to farming, the environment and the countryside, and now lives in the Cambridgeshire Fens battling the vigorous weeds and abundant mud of his garden. He was converted to the sophistication and elegance of plants through a combination of brilliant Part IA 'Biology of Organisms' lectures and furtively cycling past the Plant Breeding Institute fields (now a Park and Ride) on Trumpington Road.

He has worked in crop genetics and breeding since graduation, in the contrasting research environments of a BBSRC institute (John Innes Centre, 1992-97), multinational company (Syngenta, 1997-2006) and not-for-profit independent crop research organisation (NIAB, 2007-present). During this varied career, Phil has spent many hours working in the lab, glasshouse, field, barn, car, departure lounge and office.



ANNE THOMPSON
REGULATORY & DEVELOPMENT LEADER UK AND BENELUX
DOW AGRO SCIENCES LIMITED

I grew up on a farm in Yorkshire, England and spent my childhood out on the farm weeding wheat or sugarbeet fields and helping with harvest. All my early years were spent outside in the fields I never wanted to be indoors. My subsequent degrees a BSc in Biological Sciences from Birmingham University and a MSc in Technology of Crop Protection from Reading University taught me a love of science and understanding of how to gain answers to questions. The combination of farming and science led me to a career in crop protection.

I joined Dow AgroSciences in 1982 as a Regional Technical Officer in the North of England. I was responsible for field trials developing new products and advising growers on the use of our products. I moved to the USA from the UK in 1988. I arrived in Minnesota as a Weed Scientist working on soybeans and maize and technically supporting the local commercial team. This was a big challenge I had never worked outside of England and had never seen a soybean or maize plant nor did I understand the measurements suddenly I was faced with pounds/acre and gallons. Spraying and calibrating became a whole new challenge. The transition was made easier by the fact that I was working with fantastic people both in R & D and in commercial they gave me tremendous support and even the farmers welcomed me. I loved every minute of it and gained a confidence in my own abilities to work anywhere

In 1992 I became the European Technical Development Manager and took products from development through to launch. I spent many hours in field trials across Europe, Middle East, China and North America. I enjoyed working with many different scientists all working to a common goal.

In 2002 I took on a People Leader role managing people in Biologists and Regulatory. Dealing with Regulatory authorities was daunting at the beginning but I soon found that building solid relationships with Regulators and influencers paid huge dividends in the negotiations. Today I enjoy mentoring new people and helping them grow.



JULIAN LITTLE
MANAGER, COMMUNICATIONS AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
BAYER

Julian has worked in plant science and crop production for over twenty years. With a PhD in Molecular Plant Pathology from the University of Wales, he joined Rhone-Poulenc as a plant biochemist working in both the UK and France, and then in research project management in Aventis CropScience. Julian switched to communicating science in 2002 and is currently the Communications & Government Affairs Manager at Bayer CropScience.

Based in Cambridge, he deals with media, political and public enquiries on the subject of crop production, innovative plant breeding, together with more general issues surrounding pesticide use and sustainable agriculture. His role also covers policy and corporate social responsibility. He is Deputy-Chair of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council representing the agbiotech industry in the UK, and Chair of the communications group at EuropaBio in Brussels.



ALISON BENTLEY
DIRECTOR GENETICS & BREEDING, THE JOHN BINGHAM LABORTORY
NIAB

Alison Bentley is Director of Genetics and Breeding at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) in Cambridge, UK. Her work is centred on the manipulation of flowering-time and adaptive response as well as the exploitation of synthetic hexaploid wheat. She has a strong interest in the genetic control of complex traits and in the application of both association mapping and genomic selection for the breeding of high yielding, climate resilient wheat. Alison has also been involved in the development of multi-parent advanced generation intercross (MAGIC) populations for fine mapping in winter wheat and is using these to dissect Fusarium Head Blight resistance. Alison is Chair of the Wheat Initiative's Expert Working Group on Breeding Methods and Strategies, and Chair of the UK Monogram Network. Alison studied Agricultural Science at The University of Sydney, Australia where she also completed a PhD characterising the genetic structure of pathogen populations associated with Australian wheat production.



PROFESSOR NIGEL K. H. SLATER FRENG, CENG, FICHEME
PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR, ENTERPRISE AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Nigel is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Enterprise and the Region in the University of Cambridge, the 1999 Professor of Chemical Engineering and the former Head of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Institution of Chemical Engineers and is a Chartered Engineer. He is a member of the Greater Cambridge City Deal Board and the board of Cambridge Enterprise Ltd. Nigel leads the research activities at the Cambridge Unit for Bioscience Engineering at the University of Cambridge and has a particular interest in the manufacture and formulation of biopharmaceuticals including proteins, DNA, viruses and cells. He was awarded the Donald Medal by the Institution of Chemical Engineers for services to Biochemical Engineering and is an Honorary Professor of Tianjin University of Science and Technology, China. Nigel is a Fellow and former President of Fitzwilliam College. He has formerly worked for Unilever Research in the Netherlands and Wellcome Research in the UK and was a non-executive director of Cobra Bio-Manufacturing plc from its IPO in 2002 until its acquisition in 2010.