

UP joins global fight against diseases threatening tropical and subtropical crops

The University of Pretoria is partnering with the H2020 project Tropicsafe to fight three economically important insect-transmitted diseases affecting citrus, grapevine, and palms, which pose a major challenge to growers worldwide, including southern Africa - citrus greening or huanglongbing in citrus, grapevine yellows in grapevine and lethal yellowing in palms.



Tropicsafe

Tropicsafe aims at developing innovative tools and solutions to manage and reduce the impact of these harmful diseases that are threatening production of the three tropical and subtropical crops.

12 countries combining efforts

The €4m project is financed by the EU Research and Innovation programme Horizon 2020. Tropicsafe involves 22 leading academic institutions, public sector partners, and producer associations, with four partners from South Africa. The University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University provide expertise in plant pathology, entomology, genetics, and biotechnology, and PathoSolutions and VinPro have joined the project as industry and technology transfer and skills training partners.

Tropicsafe is led by the University of Bologna (UNIBO) in Italy with Professor Assunta Bertaccini as coordinator. Bologna hosted the kick-off meeting at the Alma Mater Studiorum to launch the four-year project. The kick-off meeting was attended by participants from twelve countries around the world - Africa: South Africa and Ghana; Europe: Italy, Spain, and France (including Guadeloupe and Réunion), United Kingdom, Denmark, Slovenia; the Americas: Jamaica, Chile, Mexico, and Cuba.

Addressing research gaps, providing sound management tools

“It is essential to combine our efforts in addressing research gaps and to provide growers with economically and environmentally sound management tools to combat the diseases severely affecting citrus, grapevine and palm production,” says Professor Kerstin Krüger of the Department of Zoology and Entomology, who leads the research at the University of Pretoria and is joined by Professor Gerhard Pietersen and students.



Citrus greening



Grapevine yellows



Trioza erytreae insect vector

Tropicsafe will deploy knowledge and technologies available for carrying out epidemiological studies aimed at filling knowledge gaps (including climatic and cultural factors), integrated pest management strategies based on innovative

diagnostic and prevention tools, reduced insecticide treatments, and pest risk assessment schemes.

This Project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no.727459.

The project will evaluate the economic sustainability and the industrial relevance of the proposed solutions and will assess the social impact of the plant diseases and the distributive effects in the target countries. Local plant protection organisations, farmers, and producers will actively participate as partners, taking part in field trials and the demonstration and exploitation of the results.

A website providing news and information on Tropicsafe will be launched soon.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>