



Active plant nematologists (APN): cultivating collaboration, overcoming challenges, and shaping the future of nematology

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Abstract

Active Plant Nematologists (APN) is a global scientific community established during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic to address the disruption of physical conferences and meetings in the field of Plant Nematology. Committed to fostering collaborations among nematology professionals and enthusiasts, APN provides a safe space for individuals worldwide, irrespective of their position, location, or background, emphasizing the vital role of nematodes in soil health and crop protection. Initially founded with a SLACK workspace, APN has grown to include 564 registered members globally, with diverse channels covering topics such as nematode taxonomy, phylogenetics, student and professional opportunities, and more. Expanding its presence across various social media platforms, APN has successfully co-organized two virtual seminars, generously sponsored by ADAMA US, attracting over 500 participants from numerous countries. These events featured parallel student contests, including a 5-minute thesis competition and a poster competition. In a recent initiative, APN collaborated with the Young Nematologists Network of the European Society of Nematologists to host the second edition of the Virtual Nematology Conference. The group is continuously exploring alternative communication methods within Nematology and engaging a broader audience. Notably, APN conducted a comprehensive survey on “the future of nematology,” seeking insights from nematologists worldwide about their motivations and aspirations within the field. This survey provided valuable data to assess the current state of nematology and identify challenges faced by the newer generation of nematologists. The results of this groundbreaking survey will be presented in a dedicated 2-hour symposium. The first hour will feature 4-5 short talks by academic and industry representatives, providing diverse perspectives on the survey findings. The second hour will host a panel Q&A with the speakers, combining prepared template questions and audience queries to facilitate in-depth discussions. This symposium aims to offer a comprehensive look into the challenges that nematologists need to focus on in the future, fostering the growth of the field and providing expanded career options for professionals. Join us as we delve into the essence of nematology, share insights, and collectively shape its promising future.