

60th MPU Anniversary Special Section

Preface

This Special Section of *Phytopathologia Mediterranea* is dedicated to the 60th Anniversary of the foundation of the Mediterranean Phytopathological Union (MPU).

On 7 August, 1962, six Italian researchers, three from the University of Bari and Bologna (Vincenzo Grasso, Gilberto Govi and Antonio Graniti) and three from the Plant Pathology Station of the Ministry of Agriculture in Rome (Anna Saponaro, Anna Luisa Madaluni and Maria Benetti) presented before Alfredo Tassitani Farfaglia, a Notary in Rome, to sign the deed of incorporation of a new Scientific Association, the “Mediterranean Phytopathological Union”. The registered location of this Association was the Plant Pathology Station at Via Casal de’ Pazzi, n. 280, Rome, Italy. The first appointments in this Society, pending regular elections, were Prof. Cesare Sabilia as President, Jean Barthelet and Umberto Francisco Diaz as Vice Presidents, and Vincenzo Grasso as Secretary-Treasurer.

The MPU was founded as a regional Society of plant pathologists, in response to the invitation of Professor Israel Reichert (“On research and co-operation of Mediterranean Phytopathologists”) published in the first issue of *Phytopathologia Mediterranea* (Reichert, 1960).

This journal was devoted to plant diseases in the Mediterranean region with a mission to assist the development of agriculture and agricultural research in the region. It had been founded in 1960 by Prof. A. Ciccarone and Prof. G. Goidanich, and started its work with an Editorial Board from several Mediterranean countries, including: J. Barthelet, C. Catsimbas, H. Dias, A.F. El-Helaly, G. Karel, L. Ling, G. Malençon, I. Reichert, J.R. Sardiña and M. Yossifovitch. As soon as MPU was funded *Phytopathologia Mediterranea* became the MPU official organ.

Paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Article 1 of the first Statute of the MPU, clearly stated the objectives of this research association, which were:

- to disseminate and increase phytopathological knowledge referring to the Mediterranean region, considered as an ecological unit;

- to establish a meeting point between plant pathologists and those in general who carry out technical activities in the region in phytopathology, so that they can make personal contacts, collaborate with each other and exchange news and information.

With these intentions, the active members of the Association, including Antonio Ciccarone, Gabriele Goidanich from Italy, Jean Barthelet and G. Viennot-Bourgin from France, I. Reichert from Israel, H. Dias and A.L. Branquiñho De Oliveira from Portugal, among many others, aimed to give the MPU high scientific and social values. Activities of the MPU commenced, and continued under guidance of multiple term Presidents including; A. Ciccarone, G. Viennot-Bourgin, A. Graniti, E.C. Tjamos, F. Lamberti, K.M. Makkouk, A. Phillips, A. Logrieco, and presently D. Tsitsigiannis. These people were assisted by Boards and Councils with members from different countries.

Congresses of the MPU have been held in Italy (Bari and Naples) in 1966; France (Montpellier and Avignon) in 1969; Portugal (Oeiras) in 1972; Yugoslavia (Zadar) in 1975; Greece (Patras) in 1980; Egypt (Cairo) in 1984; Spain (Granada) in 1987; Morocco (Agadir) in 1990; Turkey (Kusadasi) in 1994; France (Montpellier) in 1997; Portugal (Evora) in 2001; Greece (Rodos) in 2006; Italy (Rome) in 2010; Turkey (Istanbul) in 2014; in Spain (Cordoba) in 2017, and in Cyprus (Limassol) in 2022.

The MPU Statute is currently being revised to reinforce collaboration with all associations dealing with Plant Pathology. This revision aims to promote and expand the networks of plant and crop protection, and for food safety and environmental sustainability.

The 60th Anniversary of the MPU was celebrated in April 2022, during the 14th MPU Congress in Limassol, Cyprus (AA.VV., 2022). This Special Section of the journal contains four papers from the Congress, including a current topic paper and three reviews. These papers outline modern challenges to plant protection in Mediterranean crops, continuing the long-established traditions of the MPU and *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*.

The first of these papers, by Giovani *et al.* (2022) underlines what was a major motivation for establishing *Phytopathologia Mediterranea* in 1960 (Graniti *et al.*, 2010) and the MPU in 1962: the need to strengthen plant health research through coordination and collaboration in research, and to maximise outputs from limited research funding. The paper introduces and presents the relevance of the 'Plant health research priorities for the Mediterranean region' initiative.

The second paper, by Velasco-Amo *et al.* (2022), is a review focused on *X. fastidiosa*, a invasive transboundary and emerging plant pathogen, that is ranked as the first priority pest for the Europe Union. The review summarises knowledge on modern detection of *Xylella fastidiosa*, emphasising that surveillance and monitoring are essential for preventing spread of this harmful plant pathogen.

The review by Guarnaccia *et al.* (2022) outlines the spread of wood colonizing pathogens affecting fruit crop trees and other woody hosts in the Mediterranean region. After the increasing importance of grapevine trunk diseases, a topic frequently addressed in *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*, this review summarizes the situation affecting many economically important Mediterranean crops.

The third review paper, by Mellikeche *et al.* (2022), concerns the rapid and efficient diagnosis of decay-inducing pathogens using Loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) molecular assays. Early detection of these pathogens, that can be performed *in situ*, is essential for food safety and to reduce food waste. The LAMP assay provides a simple way to test products at production sites and borders, thus facilitating rapid treatment decisions to avoid the risk posed by the presence of harmful postharvest pathogens.

The efforts of members of the MPU, including all affiliated national plant pathology and protection organisations and individual researchers, will continue to promote MPU activities and *Phytopathologia Mediterranea*. These will be valuable avenues for knowledge exchange, building open, inclusive and safe environments, and contributing to food safety and security for Mediterranean countries and elsewhere.

Laura Mugnai, Richard Falloon

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