The international symposium, “From Seed to Pasta: The Durum Wheat Chain—Multi-disciplinary Approaches for a More Sustainable and High-Quality Durum Production,” was held in Bologna, Italy, June 30 through July 3, 2008. The symposium was organized by the Società Produttori Sementi, CIMMYT, and ICARDA with the support of the Emilia-Romagna regional government, the CARISBO Foundation, and the pasta maker Barilla.

The symposium’s main aim was to gather well-known experts from different research areas, all related in some way to the production of durum wheat pasta. The first presentations focused on the history and nutritional characteristics of pasta, setting the scene for the symposium. After speaking about the future of pasta and durum breeding in Italy, the focus shifted to the European Union-funded research, and the perspectives offered to wheat genomics research by the International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium. The Genomics Session covered the construction of a physical map of the 3AS chromosome arm of hexaploid wheat, a wheat diversity map, chromosome genomics in wheat, and tillering in durum wheat. The QTLs and Marker-Assisted Selection Session dealt with genomics-assisted breeding, searching for major QTLs, and marker-assisted selection. The Genetic Resources and the Use of Wild Relatives Session included presentations on wild cereal domestication, genetic diversity and map-based cloning in wild emmer, and conservation and utilization of genetic resources. The Breeding and Agronomy Session presented the results of durum breeding carried out in CIMMYT, Produttori Sementi, and North America. Additionally, information was presented on the changes in nitrogen use efficiency in CIMMYT’s durums. The Abiotic Stresses and Yield Physiology Session focused on drought and breeding, drought and salt tolerance, as well as durum’s adaptation to stressful environments. The Biotic Stresses Session began with a presentation on the transfer of resistance genes between common and durum wheat, as well as durum resistance to leaf and stem rust, Fusarium head blight, and Septoria tritici. The second part of the symposium covered nutritional and end-use quality, and pasta production.

The Nutritional Quality Session focused on starch modification and micronutrient concentration in durum and on breeding for better nutrition. The End-Use Quality Session discussed quality evaluation, genetics of endosperm color, durum end products, Fusarium mycotoxins, and trace elements. The Pasta Production Session followed, dealing with research on grain fractionation, and innovations in pasta-making technology and in durum end products processing. The final session, Socio-Economy of Durum Wheat Production and Processing, illustrated the Barilla pasta-integrated production chain, the breakdown and recomposition of the value chain, the evolution of the Canadian quality model, socio-economy of durum wheat in Morocco, and perspectives of durum wheat in the European Union.

Next, two special presentations were dedicated to the HEALTHGRAIN project and the Global Partnership Initiative for Plant Breeding (GIPB). The 133 posters accepted for display testified to the worldwide interest of researchers in the subjects covered. Many of the posters were presented by young researchers and their quality was, in many instances, very high. A jury, consisting of five members of the Scientific Committee, chose six posters that were honored with the Produttori Sementi Poster Award.

According to participants, the symposium’s success can generally be attributed to the well-chosen subjects, covering all aspects of the durum pasta production chain. The symposium’s goal of bringing together all the main stakeholders in the worldwide, durum pasta production chain, was witnessed by the 372 participants, who came from 40 countries located in all the continents.

The gala dinner marked the conclusion of the scientific part of the symposium and was held in the magnificent venue of King Enzo’s Palace in Bologna. Excursions to the Barilla pasta factory in Parma and the Società Produttori Sementi research station and seed processing plant in Argelato took place on July 4, attracting many interested participants.

Annals of Applied Biology and Cereal Chemistry will be publishing some of the manuscripts presented during the symposium; the symposium’s website, www.fromseedtopasta2008.it, will allow access to most of the lectures given in the video proceedings section, various posters will be available in the Poster List Section, while the PSB Poster Award Section is listing the six, award-winning posters. Given the great success of this event, it is highly probable that another symposium of this kind will be organized in a few years’ time.

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