Greetings, Members of the Community of Agricultural Biostimulants!

The use of biostimulants in agriculture has grown dramatically over the last years. While the success of these materials suggests that growers have found value in their use, there is still much that needs to be learned about their mode of action so that the efficacy of these materials can be improved.

The previous Biostimulant World Congresses have highlighted the remarkable advances made in the understanding of the action mechanisms of the major classes of biostimulants, including seaweed extracts, protein hydrolysates, humic substances and microbial inoculants, but have also identified knowledge gaps to be filled in. Among other things, further research is needed on the nature of the bioactive components of biostimulants, on the action of biostimulants on gene expression, on the role of the plant microbiome as possible intermediate in plant biostimulation, on the interplay between biostimulants and endogenous regulators of plant stress response.

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For sure, all these topics will be further addressed by the next World Congress on Biostimulants, but new avenues in the development of biostimulants should also be discussed, such as new biostimulant substances, e.g. plant extracts, advances in plant phenotyping and the convergence between biostimulants and other agricultural technologies, e.g. seeds and fertilizers coating technologies, or precision farming.

Challenges to the development of biostimulants are not only scientific or technical, but also regulatory. Before biostimulants can be acknowledged as a new regulatory category within the European Union or elsewhere in the world, the claims supporting their definition must be clarified and provisions for validating the claims defined, raising complex questions. Forums gathering scientists from different disciplines, agronomists, producers of biostimulants and regulatory officers, as in the previous Congresses, provide unique opportunities for discussing this important issue.

The 4th Biostimulants World Congress will be held in Spain in November 2019 and promises to continue the excellent contributions of previous congresses. A team of world-class scientists will be assembled to ensure that participants receive the most up to date and most current understanding of the biology behind biostimulants, presented in a manner that is highly approachable for agronomists, industry scientists and advanced growers. Scientific talks will be complimented with selected talks from leading industry scientists, agronomists and producers.

On behalf of the scientific and the organizing committees for the 4th Biostimulants World Congress, I welcome you to Spain in November 2019.

Dr. Patrick du Jardin
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Chairman of the Scientific Committee