

COST Action CA15223
Action Title: Modifying plants to produce interfering RNA

Agenda
Management Committee Meeting
online, Italy
March 26, 2021 09:00

1. Welcome to participants

The 5th iPLANTA MC meeting started at 10.00. The participants were welcomed by Prof. Bruno Mezzetti, Chair of the Action, and by Dr. Jeremy Sweet, Vice Chair of the Action. Bruno Mezzetti chaired the MC Meeting.

2. Verification of the presence of two-thirds of the Participating COST Countries or, if applicable, a quorum:

The quorum (2/3 of COST Countries participating in the Action) was not reached because only 19 countries were represented: AT, IT, NO, SI, UK, CZ, DE, DK, EE, CS, PT, GR, HR, TR, FR, ES, LV, BE, BG out of 32 iPlanta MoU signatory countries attended the meeting (COST doc. 134/14 B.2 "COST Action Management, Monitoring and Final Assessment" Annex I, Article 8). iPlanta COST Action Management Committee delegates also attended the conference.

3. Adoption of agenda

The agenda (Annex 1) for the final (6th) Management Committee (MC) meeting was adopted.

4. Approval of minutes and matters arising of last meeting

The Chair asked the MC members to approve the minutes of the 5th MC meeting held in Athens (GR) on 28.2.20. The agenda was approved with unanimity.

5. Update from the Action Chair

a) Status of Action: start and end dates of Action, participating COST countries, participating NNC/

The Chair reported that the action started the 27/10/2016 and will end April 26th, 2021. The Action signatory countries are 32, plus 2 NNC (Armenia and Jourdan) and 2 IPC (Brasil and now Uruguay). The Chair thanked the WG leaders for the fruitful activities carried out during the five Grant Periods, especially for the great contribution given in the organization and management of the ten webinars held online during half of the Grant Period 5 (COVID era). In particular, experts from 34 countries joined the webinars as described in the table below , and the webinars program has expanded participation to nearly 1000 experts from many countries around the world. All activities had an appropriate gender balance.

The 4 years activities – and half a year in the COVID era in 5 Grant periods were summarised by the chair as reported in the tables below.

Table 1. iPLANTA 4 years activities – and half year in COVID era
5 Grant periods

Grant Periods	WG Meetings	MC	CG	ID	Workshop	Conference	Training School	STSM's
GP1	1	1	1			1		
GP2	5	1	2	2		1	1	9
GP3	5	1	1	2	2	1	1	10
GP4	5	1				1	2	9
GP5	9	1				1		

Table 2. MC meetings and conferences

iPlanta	MC	Conference	Where
GP1	1	1	Rome
GP2	1	1	Poznan
GP3	1	1	Lisbon
GP4	1	1	Athens
GP5	1	1	Virtual

Table 3. Training schools

Training School	Trainees	Trainers	Where
GP1			
GP2	11	4	Ancona (IT)
GP3	19		Rothamsted (UK)
GP4	6	6	Gent (BE)
GP4	13	4	Neustadt (GE)

Table 4. Webinars

Webinars	title	Date	N. people
1	Development of RNAi based pesticides: new opportunities and environmental biosafety considerations	01/12/20	247
2	RNAi based pesticides: Environmental biosafety issues	07/12/20	233
3	RNAi based pesticides: Regulation issues	14/12/20	169
4	Honey Sweet: a RNAi based PPV resistant plum.	28/01/21	145
5	RNAi-based control of fungal pathogens	09/02/21	220
6	RNAi strategy to control insect pests'	16/02/21	172

7	Communication strategies on RNAi impacts in agriculture	23/02/21	173
8	The Contribution of RNAi for more sustainable and resilient food systems: Meeting with stakeholders and policymakers	04/03/21	127
9	RNAi plant epigenetics and development	04/03/21	105
10	Final conference	25/03/21	196
11	Final management committee	26/05/21	80

Table 5. International dissemination

Who	Where	When	What
Jeremy Sweet	Guadalajara, Mexico	Jun-17	ISBGMO
Bruno Mezzetti	San Diego, USA	Gen-18	PAG
Salvatore Arpaia	Vancouver, Canada	Nov-18	Entomology Conference
Bruno Mezzetti	Orlando, USA	Feb-19	NASGA

Table 6. ITC conference grants

Dr Anna Coll Rius	12 TH CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLANT MOLECULAR BIOLOGY	Aug-18
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b) IPC institutions and Specific Organizations.

“not applicable”

c) Short Term Scientific Missions (STSM): review of completed reports and new applications

Marko Petek described the STSM activities carried out during the whole project period. A total budget of 61,110.04€ was spent on 28 STSMs grants during the 5 grant periods, in particular 20 STSMs carried out by females and nine by males. Furthermore, among the 29 STSMs financed, 14 were represented by Early career Investigators (ECI). The majority of the STSMs had as country of origin Greece, Italy and Slovenia, while the destination country with the highest number of STSMs was Belgium (7 STSMs), followed by UK (6 STSMs), and Italy, France, Greece, Spain with 3 STSMs.

6. Update from the Grant Holder: Action budget status

GP Activities	GP1 2016	GP2 2017	GP3 2018	GP4 2019	GP5 2020-21	TOTAL	
Meetings	€ 54.607,29	€ 75.398,24	€ 129.819,95	€ 74.154,97	€ 21.500,00	€ 355.480,45	
Training School		€ 7.450,24	€ 15.770,00	€ 15.746,78		€ 38.967,02	
STSM		€ 18.070,00	€ 25.390,04	€ 17.650,00		€ 61.110,04	
Dissemination			€ 2.551,00		€ *61.300,00	€ 63.851,00	

ITC		€ 17.500,00	€ 2.500,00			€ 20.000,00	
FESAG	€ 8.191,09	€ 17.762,77	€ 21.901,50	€ 16.132,76	€ *12420	€ 76.408,12	
Total spent	€ 62.798,38	€ 136.181,25	€ 197.932,49	€ 123.684,51	€ *95.220,00	€ 615.816,63	*not definitive

7. Update from the COST Association, if a representative is present

WGs activities:

7.1 Michel Ravelonandro reported on WG1 activities carried out during the five GPs:

At the last meeting of the Management committee, a brief presentation about the development and use of RNAi as innovative technologies to tackle pests has been done. Disregard to the consideration of RNAi as a biopesticide, the variable efficiencies through either spraying or genetically engineered *in planta* were shown and debated during these last 4 years.

WG1 participated in :

- the annual iPlanta meetings: Roma Italy (Feb. 2017) ; Poznan – Poland (Feb. 2018); Oeiras- Portugal (Feb, 2019); Athens- Greece (Feb. 2020)
- the 2nd COST iPlanta training school RNAi, 'RNAi applications; from lab to field, Rothamsted, Harpenden, UK (Sep 2018)

WG1 was involved in the organization of the following schools:

- Ghent (Sep. 2017)
- Bordeaux (July 2018): RNAi technology, "Comparing siRNA and miRNA technology and role for improving perennial plants", July 17-18, 2018
- Ghent (Sep 2018)

WG1 disseminated their results via:

- the RNAi socioeconomic impact to EU stakeholders in Brussels, COPA-COGECA headquarter and EU parliament (Oct 2018)
- Crop Innovation and Regulations (CIR), Barcelona, Spain (Sep. 2019)

WG1 contributed in the organization of Webinars as video – conferences: Dec 2020 and Jan 2021

7.2 Huw Jones reported on WG2 activities carried out in GP5:

No face-to face WG2 activities since the Athens meeting at end of Feb 2020, however many of the webinars organized in 2021 were focused on Applications of RNAi technologies and many WG2 members contributed. WG2 supported Hilde-Gunn in aspects of Webinar 7 on communication strategies. WG2 contributed to the final session of the online conference held on the 25th of March 2021. WG2 members supported and co-authored three papers and five chapters in the iPlanta book.

7.3 Salvatore Arpaia reported on WG3 activities carried out during the five GPs:

During the final Management Committee meeting a short presentation was delivered aiming at summarizing activities of working group 3. Working group 3 has been involved in the organization of dedicated meetings back to back to scientific events either within the iPlanta consortium or through external collaborations. In details, the following events were held:

- iPlanta Kickoff meeting. Rome, Italy, 2016. A parallel session on biosafety issue was organized
- Presentations on biosafety issues with RNA interference at the first iPlanta Summer School. Ancona, Italy, 2017
- Meeting of WG3 '**Biosafety issues associated with RNAi**' and special session at the 8th Meeting of the IOBC-WPRS Working Group "GMOs in Integrated Plant Production". Ghent, Belgium 2017. In cooperation with the International Organization of Biological and integrated Control.

- Meeting of WG3 '**Biosafety issues associated with RNAi**' and special session at the XI European Congress of Entomology. Naples, Italy 2018. In cooperation with the organizing committee of the European Entomological Society
- Meeting of WG3 '**Biosafety of RNAi technology: data requirement and implications for the EU legal framework and planning RNAi plant field trials**' Rome, Italy, 2019. Back to back meeting with the public event at the Italian Senate, where a presentation of biosafety issues was delivered.
- Workshop on '**Biosafety of RNAi applications for plant protection**' at the Symposium of the International Society for Biosafety Research, Tarragona, Spain 2019
- iPlanta Webinar series 2020-2021. In particular, during webinars # 1, 2 and 3 biosafety aspects were discussed.
- Contributions to Meetings of other iPlanta working groups (Rothamsted, UK, 2017; Milan, Italy, 2017; Brussels, Belgium, 2018) and to the General Assembly Meetings (2nd IPLANTA Conference, Poznan, Poland, 2018; 3rd iPlanta Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, 2019; 4th iPlanta Conference, Athens, 2020).

Collaboration between members of the working group has led to the implementation of common scientific activities and the preparation of several scientific papers. The following have already been published during the course of the iPlanta COST action activities:

- Taning et al., 2019 RNA-based biocontrol compounds: current status and perspectives to reach the market. *Pest Management Science*
- Arpaia et al., 2020 Biosafety of GM Crop Plants Expressing dsRNA: Data Requirements and EU Regulatory Considerations. *Frontiers in Plant Science*
- Mezzetti et al., 2020 RNAi: What is its position in agriculture? *Journal of Pest Science*
- Arpaia et al., 2021 Biosafety of bee pollinators in genetically modified agro-ecosystems: Current approach and further development in the EU. *Pest Management Science*
- Arpaia et al., 2021 Environmental safety assessment of RNAi plants for pest control. *In: RNAi for Plant Improvement and Protection*
- Naegeli et al., 2021 Food and feed safety assessment of RNAi plants and products. *In: RNAi for Plant Improvement and Protection*
- WG3 members supported and co-authored three chapters in the iPlanta book.

The working group has also been actively participating to dissemination activities and WG3 members illustrated the activities of the iPlanta COST action at the following events:

- Presentation at the Meeting with stakeholders and EU Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, 2018
- Presentation at the Congress of the Entomological Society of America and Canada. Vancouver, Canada, 2018.
- Presentation at the Congress of the Entomological Society of America, Saint Louis, USA, 2019
- Presentation at the Congress 'From development to commercialization of biocontrol, biostimulants & plant protection products' Raleigh, USA, 2019 online event
- Presentation at the 'Il Plant pests and diseases forum'. Oporto, Portugal, 2021. Online event.

7.4 Vera Ventura reported on WG4 activities carried out during the five GPs:

During the final Management Committee meeting a short presentation was delivered aiming at summarizing activities of working group 4.

Working group 4 has been involved in the organization of dedicated meetings and scientific events either within the iPlanta consortium or through external collaborations. In details, the following events were held:

- WG4 meeting on “Benefits and Cost associated with using RNAi technologies” OCTOBER 18-19 – 2017
- WG4 Meeting with stakeholders on RNAi socio-economic impact. Bruxelles, 17 October 2018
- COST-iPlanta WG4 Meeting - CIR conference 2019 "Crop Innovations and Regulations" 10 - 12 September 2019 in Barcelona, Spain
- The Contribution of RNAi for more sustainable and resilient food systems: Meeting with stakeholders - iPlanta Webinar series 2020-2021.
- The Contribution of RNAi for more sustainable and resilient food systems: Meeting with policymakers- iPlanta Webinar series 2020-2021.
- Contributions to iPlanta general conferences (1st iPlanta Conference, Roma, Italy, 2016; 2nd IPLANTA Conference, Poznan, Poland, 2018; 3rd iPlanta Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, 2019).

Collaboration between members of the working group has led to the implementation of common scientific activities and the preparation of several scientific papers. The following have already been published during the course of the iPlanta COST action activities:

- Frisio, D. G., & Ventura, V., 2019. Exploring the patent landscape of RNAi-based innovation for plant breeding. Recent patents on biotechnology.
- Taning et al., 2019 RNA-based biocontrol compounds: current status and perspectives to reach the market. Pest Management Science
- Mezzetti et al., 2020 RNAi: What is its position in agriculture? Journal of Pest Science
- WG4 members co-authored a chapter in the iPlanta book.

The WG4 also developed a web survey to collect information on stakeholders' perception of RNAi based solutions and understand the scenario for the development of this new technology in the European Union.

The working group has also been actively participating to dissemination activities and WG3 members illustrated the activities of the iPlanta COST action at the following events:

- Presentation at the Congress ‘From development to commercialization of biocontrol, biostimulants & plant protection products’ Raleigh, USA, 2019 online event

Moreover, in 2018 one Short Term Scientific Mission has been done within WG4 activities:

- Vera Ventura, Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) Gloucester (UK).

7.5 Hilde-Gunn Sorteberg reported on WG5 activities which included production of 3 videos, the organization of workshops on communication in Poznan and Athens and a webinar on communication

WG5 supported and authored a chapter in the iPlanta book.

The activities of WG5 has been mostly concentrated on the last period from early 2020 with an inspiring whole day meeting in Athens March 2020, the webinar in February this spring with a great attendance and reference to since and the final meeting summarizing the activities of the whole action in March. In addition to the many and high quality papers published by the action, the book and the 10 webinars posted on YouTube we have made 6 videos compressing the content of the webinars with over 1000 participants. The last part will be to use these videos to attract more attention to the webinars for those wanting to know more and from there they might get in contact with experts working on their specific interest in RNAi. Finally, we appreciate good communication with the other four working groups, input to the key messages included in the book and all the fruitful discussions throughout the period of the

action. We expect many of the participants to keep in contact and thank COST especially for making this project possible and the high value courses given by the COST academy.

8. Monitoring of the Action

“not applicable”.

9. Implementation of COST policies on:

- a) Promotion of gender balance and Early Career Investigators (ECI)

“not applicable”

- b) Inclusiveness and Excellence (see below list of Inclusiveness Target Countries)

“not applicable”

10. Follow-up of MoU objectives: progress report of working groups

11. Scientific planning

- a) Scientific strategy (MoU objectives, GP Goals, WG tasks and deliverables)

“not applicable”.

- b) Action Budget Planning

“not applicable”.

- b) Long-term planning (including anticipated locations and dates of future activities)

“not applicable”.

- c) Dissemination planning (Publications and outreach activities)

- Jeremy Sweet announced the publication of the book “RNAi for Plant improvement and protection”, edited by Bruno Mezzetti, Jeremy Sweet and Lorenzo Burgos, published by CABI. The book contains 16 chapters on different aspects of RNA interference and is published as an ebook as well as a printed version. <https://iplanta.univpm.it/sites/iplanta.univpm.it/files/9781789248890%20RNAi%20fpr%20plant%20Improvement.pdf>
- The chair showed the list of dissemination activities and asked for the approval:

Manuscript (<https://iplanta.univpm.it/node/90>):

Title	Authors	Publisher
RNAi, what is its position in agriculture?	Mezzetti B, Smaghe G, Arpaia, S, Christiaens O, Dietz-Pfeilstetter A, Jones H, Kostov K, Sabbadini S, Opsahl-Sorteberg H-G, Ventura V, Taning CNT, Sweet J	Journal of Pest Science, 2020, 93(4), pp. 1125–1130 (DOI:10.1007/s10340-020-01238-2)
Biosafety of GM Crop Plants Expressing dsRNA: Data Requirements and EU Regulatory Considerations	Salvatore Arpaia, Olivier Christiaens, Kara Giddings, Huw Jones, Bruno Mezzetti, Felix Moronta-Barrios, Joe N. Perry, Jeremy B Sweet, Clauvis N. T. Taning, Guy Smaghe and Antje Dietz-Pfeilstetter	Frontiers in Plant Science, 2020, 11, 940 (https://doi.org/10.3389/fpls.2020.00940)

Does RNAi-Based Technology Fit within EU Sustainability Goals?	Taning, C.N.T., Mezzetti, B., Kleter, G., Smaghe, G., Baraldi, E.	Trends in Biotechnology, 12, (DOI:10.1016/j.tibtech.2020.11.008)
RNA-based biocontrol compounds: current status and perspectives to reach the market	Taning, C.N.T., Arpaia, S., Christiaens, O., Dietz-Pfeilstetter A., Jones H, Mezzetti B., Sabbadini S., Sorteberg HG, Sweet J., Ventura, V., Smaghe, G.	Pest Management Sciences, 73, 3:841-845 (https://doi.org/10.1002/ps.5686)
RNA Interference Strategies for Future Management of Plant Pathogenic Fungi: Prospects and Challenges	Daniel Gebremichael, Zeraye Mehari Haile, Francesca Negrini, Silvia Sabbadini, Luca Capriotti, Bruno Mezzetti and Elena Baraldi,	Plants 2021, 10(4), 650 (https://doi.org/10.3390/plants10040650)
Adventitious Shoot Regeneration from In Vitro Leaf Explants of the Peach Rootstock Hansen 536	Angela Ricci, Luca Capriotti, Bruno Mezzetti, Oriano Navacchi and Silvia Sabbadini	Plants 2020, 9(6), 755 (https://doi.org/10.3390/plants9060755)
Genetic Transformation in Peach (<i>Prunus persica L.</i>): Challenges and Ways Forward.	Ricci, A.; Sabbadini, S.; Prieto, H.; Padilla, I.M.; Dardick, C.; Li, Z.; Scorza, R.; Limer, C.; Mezzetti, B.; Perez-Jimenez, M.; Burgos, L.; Petri, C.	Plants 2020, 9, 971 (https://doi.org/10.3390/plants9080971)
Biotechnological Approaches: Gene Overexpression, Gene Silencing, and Genome Editing to Control Fungal and Oomycete Diseases in Grapevine	Capriotti, L.; Baraldi, E.; Mezzetti, B.; Limer, C.; Sabbadini, S.	Int. J. Mol. Sci. 2020, 21, 5701 (https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms21165701)
RNAi for Plant Improvement and Protection	Edited by: Bruno Mezzetti, Jeremy Sweet, Lorenzo Burgos	www.cabi.org/bookshop/ April 2021 Hardback 216 Pages 9781789248890
Biosafety of bee pollinators in genetically modified agro-ecosystems: Current approach and further development in the EU	Salvatore Arpaia, Guy Smaghe, Jeremy B Sweet	Pest Management Science https://doi.org/10.1002/ps.6287
Double-stranded RNA targeting Dicer-like genes compromises the pathogenicity	Zeraye M. Haile, Daniel Gebremichael, Luca Capriotti, Barbara Molesini, Francesca Negrini, Marina Collina, Silvia	Frontiers in Plant Science doi: 10.3389/fpls.2021.667539

of <i>Plasmopara viticola</i> on grapevine	Sabbadini, Bruno Mezzetti, Elena Baraldi	
dsRNA-Mediated Pest Management of <i>Tuta absoluta</i> Is Compatible with Its Biological Control Agent <i>Nesidiocoris tenuis</i>	Nomi Sarmah, Athanasios Kaldis, Clauvis Nji Tizi Taning, Dionysios Perdakis, Guy Smagghe and Andreas Voloudakis	Insects 2021, 12(4), 274; https://doi.org/10.3390/insects12040274
Robust Response to Plum Pox Virus Infection Via Plant Biotechnology	Michel Ravelonandro, Pascal Briard, Ralph Scorza, Ann Callahan, Christopher Dardick, Ioan Zagrai and Jiban Kumar Kundu	Genes in press

Journal Special Issue:

Frontiers in Plant Sciences - Research Topic "[Advances and Challenges of RNAi Based Technologies for Plants](#)", concluded with 10 accepted manuscripts.

Frontiers in Plant Sciences - Research Topic "[Advances and Challenges of RNAi Based Technologies for Plants - Volume 2](#)", concluded with 4 accepted manuscripts.

Technical dissemination:

Fresh Plaza: Does RNAi-Based Technology Fit within EU Sustainability Goals?

<https://www.freshplaza.de/article/9313148/passt-rnai-basierte-technologie-zu-den-nachhaltigkeitszielen-der-eu/>

<https://www.freshplaza.it/article/9312942/la-tecnologia-basata-su-rnai-rientra-negli-obiettivi-di-sostenibilita-dell-ue/>

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9313061/does-rnai-based-technology-fit-within-eu-sustainability-goals/>

<https://www.freshplaza.es/article/9313092/encaja-la-tecnologia-basada-en-arni-dentro-de-los-objetivos-de-sostenibilidad-de-la-union-europea/>

<https://www.freshplaza.fr/article/9313104/la-technologie-basee-sur-l-arni-est-elle-couverte-par-les-objectifs-de-durabilite-de-l-ue/>

Fresh Plaza :iPlanta Final Conference

<https://www.freshplaza.it/article/9305296/modificare-le-piante-per-produrre-rna-interferente-conferenza-finale/>

<https://www.freshplaza.fr/article/9305385/modifier-les-plantes-pour-produire-de-l-arn-interferent-conference-finale/>

<https://www.freshplaza.es/article/9305375/modificando-las-plantas-para-producir-arn-de-interferencia-conferencia-final/>

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9305147/modifying-plants-to-produce-interfering-rna-final-conference/>

<https://www.freshplaza.de/article/9306178/modifizierung-von-pflanzen-zur-erzeugung-interferierender-rna-abschlusskonferenz/>

VIDEOS:

Is RNAi Technology a Green Opportunity?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPRyXVPsw38&ab_channel=OmniaCom

1 What RNA is https://youtu.be/3_Z6--iTGOQ

2 Why RNA and stakeholders <https://youtu.be/7xwKIWO1jgg>

3 Ecology <https://youtu.be/2vMLCR4hTz4>

4 Regulations <https://youtu.be/ngM9O27mxd8>

5 Communications
6 COST and ACTION info

<https://youtu.be/buq8qkJ0pD4>
<https://youtu.be/H2DSayesUCY>

iPlanta Press Release realized during the project (<https://iplanta.univpm.it/?q=node/42>)

EU

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[Rome Press release](#)

[Fresh Plaza, press release Rome](#)

[Publicpolicy](#)

[WG3Meeting in Rome](#)

[Fresh Plaza](#)

[CORRIERE. IT: Rna-interferenza: la nuova «ingegneria genetica» per le piante](#)

[Terra e Vita 24/02/2017](#)

[Rassegna stampa 22/2/17](#)

[Rassegna stampa 21/2/2017](#)

[Comunicati stampa Conference iPlanta, Roma 15-17/02/2017](#)

[Fresh Plaza: TUTTI I PRO DERIVANTI DALLE NUOVE TECNICHE DI MIGLIORAMENTO GENETICO IN AGRICOLTURA](#)

[IPLANTA Press release ITA](#)

[PROGETTO-IPLANTA-I-VANTAGGI-DEL-SILENZIAMENTO-GENICO-MEDIANTE-RNAI](#)

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12. Requests to join the Action from:

a) COST countries

“not applicable”.

b) Institutions in Near Neighbouring Countries, International Partner Countries, and/or Specific Organisations: EU agencies, European RTD Organisation, International Organisations

“not applicable”

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13. AOB

14. Location and date of next meeting

“not applicable”.

15. Summary of MC decisions

16. Closing