

## **PLANT SCIENCE EXPERTS GATHER AT UP FOR 2ND ANNUAL DUPONT PLANT BREEDING SYMPOSIUM AFRICA**

Scientists and industry leaders in plant science shared the latest advances in plant breeding at the 2nd Annual DuPont Plant Breeding Symposium Africa at the University of Pretoria (UP) on September 29. The only DuPont Pioneer-sponsored symposium held in Africa, the meeting brought together researchers, students and industry leaders from across the globe through live streaming on the Internet and Instagram (Dupont-Africa). Participants came from China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United States and Zimbabwe.



Hosted by the Genomics Research Institute (GRI) and the Department of Plant Science at UP, the meeting was organised by a postgraduate student committee made of David Nsibo, Megan McCaghey, Johan Liversage, Katrien de Ridder, Joel Dube and Katlego Masike. The symposium was co-ordinated by Professor Dave Berger of the Department of Plant Science, Drs Rikus Kloppers of Pannar Seed (Pty) Ltd and Tabare Abadie of DuPont Pioneer, USA. The meeting was one of more than 40 student-led symposia sponsored by DuPont at universities worldwide since 2008.

The topic this year, "Current innovations in insect resistance management and pest control", shone the spotlight on challenges faced by various players in the agricultural sector as well as

scientific research conducted worldwide to address them. Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences Professor Jean Lubuma opened the symposium and congratulated the organising committee for being at the forefront of the meeting and their promotion of UP's vision of being a leading research intensive university in Africa.

Speakers included the Vice-president of Crop Genetics Research & Development at DuPont Pioneer John Arbuckle as well as academics from the North West University, the University of the Free State, the Agricultural Research Council and UP. FABlans Drs Bridget Crampton and Juan Vorster presented lectures titled, "Northern corn leaf blight in maize and sorghum: Piecing together the puzzle" and "Running the Red Queen's race: Plant inhibitors and Insect proteases" respectively.



PhD student Brigitte Langenhoven was awarded the Best Poster Presentation for her presentation, "Insight into three putative *Cercospora zeina* effector genes and the role they play in virulence". PhD student Osmond Mlonyeni bagged the prize for the Best Student Presentation for his talk, "The value of population genetics in managing invasive pests through biological control: The *Sirex noctilio-Deladenus siricidicola* example." The symposium gave students a valuable opportunity to foster relationships with experts that could advance their research and professional careers.