



Vienna, 20 April 2021

Invitation to host the 2nd Global Sorghum Conference (2022/2023)

BACKGROUND

Following the success of the 2018 “Sorghum in the 21st Century” global sorghum conference, an International Sorghum Task Force (ISTF) was formed to capitalize on the momentum generated by the previous conference and provide an organizing body for regular global sorghum conferences. The ISTF represents the global sorghum research community and is hosted by the International Association for Cereal Science and Technology (ICC). Its main function is to ensure that future global sorghum conferences are fully inclusive and represent the broad spectrum of the international sorghum community. With this in mind, the ISTF is calling for applications from appropriately qualified organizations or consortia to host the next global sorghum conference – either as an in-person format in 2023, or virtually in 2022 or 2023, depending on the resolution of current restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The global sorghum conference objectives include the following:

- To examine topics of international importance in the field of sorghum science, development, and industry;
- To provide a forum for the presentation of new research and to foster interaction between academia, government and national programs, NGOs and the private sector;
- To provide an environment for persons with international interests in sorghum that will foster a better understanding of issues that are important to various nations of the world, and facilitate the development of professional relationships and exchange of ideas;
- To stimulate international cooperation in important new endeavours of worldwide significance.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to successfully host a conference of a global nature on a crop that has important regional specificities in terms of constraints, uses, markets and stakeholders, the ISTF believes it is important to put in place a structure to ensure that the conference is truly international in nature and does not become too regionally specific or narrow in scope. For this reason, the conference planning structure will be composed of an International Science Committee (ISC) and an Organizing Committee (OC), both of which will be endorsed and supported by the ICC and the ISTF. While interchanges between these committees are deemed desirable, they will function independently. This structure requires that a bid would need to be submitted by a tandem of organizers (i.e. a separate chair for the ISC and a different chair for the OC). This de facto follows the same structure as was employed for the 2018 conference, in which Kansas State University/SMIL and the University of Pretoria endorsed respective roles of the

ISC and OC. The co-applicants of the winning bid will then represent the co-chairs of the 2nd Global Sorghum Conference ISC and OC.

The terms of reference of the ISC and OC are explained below, as well as the role of ICC and of the ISTF in this process:

The International Association for Cereal Science and Technology (ICC)

ICC, on behalf of the ISTF, will assist the organisation of the 2nd Global Sorghum Conference by focusing on logistical issues. ICC will provide conference management software which will allow online registration and abstract submission as well as review and many other features. ICC will be responsible for activities, such as delegate registration, practical abstract handling, international marketing, and communicating with delegates, abstract submitters and reviewers, sponsor handling and on other practical issues. Furthermore, the ICC will connect the OC and ISC to relevant ICC members, committees, and networks, enabling them to develop a high-quality scientific programme.

In the event that the conference takes a virtual format, ICC can also lead in the selection and management of an online platform appropriate to the overall conference structure in order to help ensure a successful experience for all attendees.

International Sorghum Task Force (ISTF)

The International Sorghum Task Force (ISTF) will focus on maintaining a high scientific standard and ensuring the continuation, further development, and success of the Global Sorghum Conference into the future. Throughout the process of organising the conference event, from the bid to the evaluation survey, the ISTF will ensure that all activities are in line with its global mission and goals.

To ensure that objectives and targets are met, ISTF will be involved in the planning and management of the conference with the local conference organizer. Furthermore, the ISTF will monitor the proper and consistent use of the conference brand to safeguard its reputation and longevity.

More details on the ISTF are available on the ICC webpage under <https://www.icc.or.at/general-information-about-icc/our-task-forces>.

International Science Committee (ISC)

The ISC is responsible for developing a comprehensive and well-balanced scientific programme of high-quality. The ISC will review abstract submissions according to the pre-defined review criteria, process, and timeline. The ISC is responsible for assembling a panel of reviewers of submitted abstracts. Its activities include the preparation of the programme, coordinating the abstract submission and facilitating the review process, which in turn will be the basis to defining the conference session scopes and oral and poster presentations. In addition, the ISC can also suggest topics and invited speakers. The international and local members of the ISC are appointed by the ISC chair and the chair of the OC. This committee is endorsed by ICC and the ISTF.

Composition of the ISC

The chair and a draft list of proposed members of the ISC should be provided as part of the bidding document. The committee should be composed of 8-12 members, including chair and co-chair, with at least half representing countries outside of the host country. The ISC should also demonstrate a strong gender balance among its members. The committee members should be selected to:

- Provide an acceptable representation from sorghum growing countries
- Provide an appropriate representation of the relevant disciplines
- Ensure representation from both developed and developing countries
- Ensure an acceptable gender balance (as close to 50/50 as possible)
- If possible, include representation of the private sector

In addition, the ISC chair must have a strong credential around sorghum research and development and should have demonstrated capacity to lead a professional scientific conference of a global nature. However, it is not essential that the chair be members of the host organization.

Organizing Committee (OC)

The OC oversees the local organization, which includes deciding on the conference venue, date, logistical aspects, field visits, etc. The OC will appoint sub-organization committees (sponsorship, training, exposition, media relations, etc. ...). These will be decided by the OC in consultation with the ISC. The conference is a unique opportunity for the OC to showcase their institution's expertise and the developments in the field of sorghum in their region. Therefore, the OC will have the important role of connecting the specificities of sorghum science locally to the ISC. The scientific and educational programme will also strongly determine the success of the conference. Therefore, the OC will be in charge of ensuring ways to bring in regional students and young scientists to the conference. The OC consists of a chair and co-chair and a number of active national and international members. The OC is supported by the ISTF and ICC, who act as a repository of knowledge and experience from past conferences, particularly on previous successful strategies to ensure the global nature of the sorghum conference.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONFERENCE

The financial responsibility for the conference will lie with the designated host. Any pre-payments, any financial risks, losses as well as any profits gained shall remain with the local host. All international and regional sponsorship of the 2nd Global Sorghum Conference must go into the conference budget handled by the financial responsible body and serve to cover costs incurred by the event.

As contribution to the service, time, travel, and other incurred expenses related to the preparation and the implementation of a physical 2nd Global Sorghum Conference, the designated conference host will provide ICC the following financial contribution:

- A net return of 10% of the registration fee per participant, with a minimum payment of 10,000 EUR (excl. VAT).

In the event that the 2nd Global Sorghum Conference is implemented in a virtual format, this required fee shall be adjusted to appropriately reflect the services provided by ICC. Justification for the adjusted fee schedule will be provided to the ISTF and the conference host prior to the incurrence of any expenses.

Neither the ISTF nor ICC can be made liable for any financial losses or legal disputes and will not be liable for staff, internal institutional arrangements and costs related or unrelated to the conference activities.

BIDDING PROCESS TIMELINE

Any organisation interested in hosting the 2nd Global Sorghum Conference - either physically or virtually - is asked to submit an application to the ICC at office@icc.or.at.

- **Application deadline:** 15 June 2021.

Successful bidders will be informed of selection by 15 July 2021.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The successful application must provide:

- A description of the organization(s) hosting the conference and with compelling evidence that it is aligned to the goals of the conference and has the capacity to run a professional scientific conference.
- A list of key individuals involved in the conference, including their role in the conference organisation, including:
 - One-page CVs for the chair of the OC and the ISC demonstrating their suitability for the role, and
 - A short statement of motivation by nominated committee members to prove their willingness to contribute to the conference committees.
- A programme outline and short description, how the potential host intends to bring together global stakeholders from science and well as industry.
- Evidence of sufficient financial capacity and other support to ensure the conference's success.
- A brief overview of the prospective scientific program, including main sessions and conference themes.

- *In the case that the conference is planned as an in-person format* - Information about the potential venue location(s) where the conference will take place, including the availability of suitable accommodation and event space, as well as information about access to the conference location from international destinations (including visa requirements) and the impact that COVID-19 restrictions may still have at this time.

APPLICATION EVALUATION

ISTF will evaluate as quickly as possible all submitted applications. In addition to the requirements detailed hereinabove in this invitation, the ISTF will select the winning bid according to the following criteria:

1. Host institution reputation and capacity to host the conference

- Demonstrated alignment between the institution's goals in running the conference and the conference's main nature and objectives.
- Demonstrated capacity of the host organization to run a professional scientific conference of a global nature.

2. Calibre, experience and equitable representation/diversity of the proposed OC and ISC committee members

- The co-chair of the ISC and chair of OC should have a strong credential around sorghum research and development and should have demonstrated capacity to lead a professional scientific conference of a global nature.
- Demonstrated capacity of the nominated OC and ISC chairs to lead a professional scientific conference of a global nature.
- Proposed plan to ensure an adequate partnership between the ISC and OC in view of their roles and nature set forth in this document.
- Appropriate committee member representation of the diversity of sorghum growing countries, relevant disciplines, public and private interests, and gender distribution.

3. Overall conference representation of the global scientific sorghum community

- A demonstrated effort to fully integrate both competing and complimentary interests in sorghum across the global scientific community, including key questions in both developing and developed countries and pertaining (but not limited) to: development/smallholder production, livestock feed, energy production, human nutrition and specialty uses.

4. Quality of the proposed programme

- Proposed plan to ensure an adequate partnership between the ISC and OC in view of their

roles and nature set forth in this document.

- The proposed program must:
 - Balance global sorghum research issues and local/regional specificities,
 - Balance research topics on the entire sorghum value chain,
 - Balance the requirements and interests of sorghum researchers in low- and high-income countries,
 - Be of high scientific quality.

5. Integration of various levels of the sorghum industry, including private sector and commercial interests in addition to national programs, NGOs and development priorities

- Demonstrated plan and strategy to encourage and facilitate participation of numerous actors in the sorghum industry and across the value chain via the scientific program, site visits, sponsorships, booth displays, facilitated discussions and/or other conference components.

6. Conference venue facilities and available dates, international access to the city and accommodation facilities as well as balanced conference budget

- Ease of access to the conference location for international participants including transport options, ease of visa applications and provision for support for obtaining conference visas for participants.
- Access to appropriate conference facilities.
- Availability of financial provisions to ensure the conference’s success including underwriting and insurance.

Applications will be scored according to the following rubric:

CRITERIA	AVAILABLE POINTS	SCORE
Host institution reputation and capacity to host the conference	20	
Overall conference representation of the global scientific sorghum community	20	
Calibre, experience and equitable representation/diversity of the proposed OC and ISC committee members	20	
Quality and scope of the proposed programme	15	



Conference venue facilities and available dates, international access to the city and accommodation facilities as well as balanced conference budget	15	
Integration of various levels of the sorghum industry, including private sector and commercial interests in addition to national programs, NGOs and development priorities	10	
TOTAL SCORE	100	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further inquiries or information, interested parties may contact ICC President Dr. Charles Brennen at or the Global Sorghum Conference ISTF chairman, Dr. David Jordan, via office@icc.or.at