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Invitation to host the Global Sorghum Conference in 2022 or 2023

Background

After the success of the 2018 Global Sorghum Conference it was decided to form an International Sorghum Task Force (ISTF) to capitalize on the momentum generated by the previous conference and provide an organizing body for regular global sorghum conferences. The ISTF is a representative body for the global sorghum research community which is hosted by the International Association for Cereal Science and Technology (ICC). The main function of the ISTF is to ensure that future Global Sorghum Conferences are truly global and inclusive. With this in mind the ISTF is calling for expressions of interest from appropriately qualified organizations or consortia to hold the next global sorghum conference.

Global Sorghum Conference objectives

The global sorghum conference objectives are:

- 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 and government and 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, facilitate the development of professional relationships and the exchange of ideas;
- To stimulate international cooperation in important new endeavours of worldwide significance.

Conference structure and responsibilities

For holding a conference of a global nature, on a crop that has important regional specificities in terms of constraints, uses, markets and stake-holders, the ISTF thinks it is important to put in place a structure to ensure that the conference is truly international and does not become too regionally specific and narrow in scope. For this reason, the conference structure will be composed of an International Science Committee (ISC) and an Organizing Committee (OC) 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 put by a tandem of organizers, i.e. a chair for the ISC and a chair for the OC. This is de facto what happened in the last conference, with KSU/SMIL and University of Pretoria endorsing respective roles of ISC and OC. The leaders of the winning bid then become the (co-)chairs of the Global Sorghum Conference (chair of ISC and chair of OC). The terms of reference of these two committees 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 International Sorghum Conference by focusing on logistical issues. ICC will provide a 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, ICC connects the OC and ISC to relevant ICC members, committees, and networks, enabling them to develop a high-quality scientific programme.

International Sorghum Task Force (ISTF)

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

To ensure that objectives and targets are met, ISTF is involved in the planning and management of the conference with the PCO. Furthermore, the ISTF monitors the proper and consistent use of the conference brand and safeguards 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 reviews 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. The ISC's activities include the preparation of the programme, coordinating abstract submission and the review process, which in turn will be the basis to defining the session scopes and the oral and poster presentations. In addition, the ISC can also suggest topics and invited speakers. The international and local members of the International Scientific Committee are appointed by the chair of the ISC and the chair of the OC. This committee is endorsed by ICC and the ISTF.

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 at least 6 members but not more than 10 including the chair.

The committee should be appropriately balanced to meet the following criteria:

- The chair must have international standing in the global research community with experience of working on program committees of international conferences. It is not essential that they are members of the host organization.

- The committee members should be selected to
 - ensure an acceptable gender balance
 - provide an acceptable representation from sorghum growing countries
 - provide an appropriate representation of the relevant disciplines
 - ensure representation from both developed and developing countries
 - if possible include a representative of the private sector

Organizing Committee (OC)

The OC oversees the local organization, which includes deciding on the conference venue, date, logistical aspects, field visits, etc. The organization of the conference will appoint sub-organization committees (sponsorship, training, exposition, media relation, 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 International 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 the 2nd International Sorghum Conference, the designated conference host will provide ICC and the ISTF 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). Any surplus from this contribution shall serve the ISTF for its future work.

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 timelines

The bid process consists of two rounds. The first round requires interested organisations to submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) of no more than 5 pages to office@icc.or.at. The organisations of the shortlisted top three Eoi's will be selected within 3 weeks and be invited to submit a full proposal.



- Submit EoI to office@icc.or.at by 30th of Sept. 2020
- Shortlisted EoI selected by the ISTF and shortlisted applicants informed by 20th of Oct. 2020
- Shortlisted applicants are required to submit full proposals submitted by 31st of Dec. 2020
- Successful and unsuccessful bidders will be informed by 22nd Jan. 2021

Expression of Interest requirements

The Expression of Interest should not exceed 5 pages and 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. One-page CVs should be provided for the chair of the OC and the ISC demonstrating their suitability for the role.
- Evidence of sufficient financial and other support to ensure the conference's success.
- Information about the potential venue location(s) where the conference will take place including the availability of suitable accommodation and venues and information about access to the conference venue from international destinations (including visa requirements).
- A brief overview of the prospective scientific program including main sessions and conference themes.

Full proposal requirements

ISTF will evaluate the submitted applications. All bidding parties will be informed whether they are shortlisted. Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal application. The preparation of the full proposal is by invitation only and the ISTF will select the winning bid according to the following criteria:

Part I – the institution's reputation and capacity to host the conference and the calibre, and experience of the proposed OC and ISC chairs

- 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.

- 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.
- Availability of financial provisions to ensure the conference's success including underwriting and insurance.
- 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.

Part II - The candidate organizations conference venue(s) facilities and the available dates, international access to the city and the 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.

Part III- Quality of the scientific 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.