

Introduction

In 2001 a group of scientists from the EU and Associated States in Eastern Europe recognized that it was timely to initiate a Workshop which dealt with the impacts of global climate change – especially changes in rainfall and temperature, together with anthropogenic impacts such as increased salinity, effects of heavy metals and so on – on the productivity of crops throughout the EU and beyond and how this might affect the sustainability of agricultural production of plant products. To this end a proposal was made for support from the European Commission, which was forthcoming. In addition support was provided by MONSANTO, GMB Holding, Agrobiointitute, and Ministry of Environment and Water of Republic of Bulgaria. The workshop took place during September 2002 in Varna, Bulgaria.

These proceedings are the outcome of the workshop which spans not only the various diverse approaches taken to address these problems, but also attempts to provide advice to decision making bodies in the EU, regarding the appropriate strategies which might be adopted.

The presentations at the workshop range from fundamental studies on plant responses to environmental and anthropogenic stresses to broader assessments of the merits/demerits of different agronomic approaches, as a contribution to ongoing debates within and without Europe.

Not unexpectedly, the workshop does not come down in favour of any one approach, since opinions are divided both within the scientific community and in the wider public.

We hope however that these proceedings will provide both scientists and the informed layman with an insight into the issues involved to enable them to objectively assess the best possible way forward.

Many people and organizations contributed to this workshop, as well as the participants themselves.

However special mention must be made of Dr Vera Alexieva, Dr Iskren Sergiev, Mrs Gillian Hall and Mrs Mariann Denyer without whose Herculean efforts the workshop would not have been successful.

Emanuil Karanov

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Co-presidents



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