

Speakers biographies

Edward Bray [@AgraFacts](#)



Edward Bray joined the *AGRA FACTS* & *AGRA FOCUS* team as Deputy Editor in February 2010. His portfolio has included health, environment, & trade issues as well as agricultural policy. Previously, he was working in the European Parliament with the unit responsible for transparency & access to documents. On arrival in Brussels in December 2008, he started out as a monitoring consultant for Dods EU Monitoring, where he was responsible for tracking legislation in a wide range of areas. A graduate of French & German from Cambridge University in the UK, Ed pursued his interest in European politics on a Masters Course, which took him to Prague & Berlin, where he wrote his thesis on the politics of climate change & the implications for agriculture. Ed is also a reporter with the independent video platform - [viEUws.eu](#).

Anthea McIntyre MEP [@anthea_mcintyre](#)



Anthea McIntyre became an MEP in 2011 and is an active member of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee in the European Parliament, writing a report on "The future of Europe's horticulture sector - strategies for growth", which was adopted by the Parliament in 2014.

She has also written a report on "Technological Solutions for Sustainable Agriculture in the EU" and is the rapporteur for the legislation on "Protective Measures against Pests of Plants".

Anthea additionally serves as a member of the Employment and Social Affairs committee and in July 2014 was elected as the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group coordinator. In July 2015, she also joined the Science and Technology Options Assessment (STOA) panel.

Prior to her appointment to the European Parliament, Anthea had a successful career as a business woman, serving as director of MCP Systems Consultants, an independent consultancy specializing in business intelligence systems, for some 25 years. Notably, Anthea won the European Woman of Achievement Award for Business in 1997 and in 2009 MCP won a national award for technological innovation in the Health Service. She is also a partner in the family's agricultural small-holding and vineyard.



Prof. Dr. Marc Van Montagu

Marc Van Montagu is Emeritus Professor at Ghent University, Belgium, and Founder and Chairman of IPBO (International Plant Biotechnology Outreach), VIB/ Ghent University. He is also UNIDO Goodwill Ambassador for Agribusiness and Chairman of the Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI). A pioneer in plant molecular biology, he is well known (with J. Schell) as the discoverer of the Ti-plasmid and the inventor of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* based plant transformation technology, used worldwide to genetically engineer plants. He has made major contributions to the identification of genes involved in plant growth, development and flowering. A Founding Member and Member of the Board of Directors of two Belgian biotech companies, he has driven front-line innovations for a more sustainable biotechnology based agriculture, such as plants resistant to insects or tolerant to herbicides. He has received numerous prizes, including the Japan prize, and in October 2013 he was awarded the World Food Prize. A member of several academies, including the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts, the National Academy of Sciences of the United States, Italy, Brazil, Russia and the Third World Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture of France, and the Academy of Engineering of Sweden, he has produced over 1000 publications. Due to his accomplishments he received in 1990 the title of Baron from the King Baudouin of Belgium. Marc Van Montagu holds a PhD in Organic Chemistry/ Biochemistry and a BA in Chemistry from Ghent University, Belgium.

Beat Späth @BeatSpath



Beat Späth joined EuropaBio, the European association of biotechnology industries, in 2011, and is director for agricultural biotechnology since 2014. Beat is a German and Swiss citizen who studied politics and languages in the UK, France and Belgium. His previous positions were also Brussels-based, as an assistant to a Member of the European Parliament (from 2001), and with the German Retail Federation's Brussels office (from 2004). As director for agricultural biotechnology, Beat works with a small team and member companies on all aspects plant biotechnology, with a focus on GMO imports into the EU.

Dr. Richard J. Roberts



Dr. Richard J. Roberts is the Chief Scientific Officer at New England Biolabs, Beverly, Massachusetts. He received a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry in 1968 from Sheffield University and then moved as a postdoctoral fellow to Harvard. From 1972 to 1992, he worked at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, eventually becoming Assistant Director for Research under Dr. J.D. Watson. He began work on the newly discovered Type II restriction enzymes in 1972 and these enzymes have been a major research theme. Studies of transcription in Adenovirus-2 led to the discovery of split genes and mRNA splicing in 1977, for which he received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1993. During the sequencing of the Adenovirus-2 genome computational tools became essential and his laboratory pioneered the application of computers in this area. DNA methyltransferases, as components of restriction-modification systems are also of active interest and the first crystal structures for the *HhaI* methyltransferase led to the discovery of base flipping. Bioinformatic studies of microbial genomes to find new restriction systems are a major research focus as is the elucidation of DNA methyltransferase recognition sequences using SMRT sequencing.

Barend Verachtert



Barend Verachtert is the Head of the Agri-Food chain Unit in the Research and Innovation Directorate-General (DG RTD) of the European Commission. The unit is in charge of the development and implementation of research and innovation policies in the context of the Food Research and Innovation Area and Horizon2020. Over the last 5 years, he has held various positions within DG RTD in the field of the bioeconomy. In its start-up phase, he was the interim Executive Director of the Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking, a public-private partnership. Previous assignments in DG RTD included the SME unit in charge of the development of SME research policies and the promotion of SME participation in FP6 and FP7, and the Food Quality and Safety unit. Before joining the European Commission in 1998, he was a technology acquisition manager for Plant Genetic Systems NV, a Belgian plant biotechnology company. He obtained a PhD in biology from the University of Leuven (1988).

Mr Pekka Pesonen [@pekka_pesonen](#)



Mr Pekka Pesonen is the Secretary General of Copa, representing European farmers, and Cogeca, representing European agri-cooperatives, which together count more than 70 national farming organisations from across Europe. Previously, he worked as State Secretary for the Finnish Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry. In addition, Mr Pesonen has extensive professional experience in lobbying at EU level on behalf of Finnish farmers, forest owners (MTK and SLC) and agri-forestry cooperatives (Pellervo). In the 1990s, he worked in the sales and marketing department of Valio, a Finnish dairy company. Mr Pesonen has also been a member of several high level advisory groups concerning EU policy preparation. He is a qualified agronomist and is married with three teenage children.

Dr. Filip Cnudde [@filip_cnudde](#)



Filip Cnudde is a bio-engineer from the University of Ghent, Belgium, specialized in agricultural biotechnology. Filip obtained his PhD in plant molecular biology from the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands, and was communication manager for a European project on food risk analysis at the University of Wageningen, the Netherlands. He came back to Belgium to become Regulatory Manager Green Biotechnology at EuropaBio, where he experienced at first hand the many regulatory and political challenges to agricultural biotechnology. Filip joined Dow AgroSciences in 2011 as EU Government Affairs & Science Policy Leader where he engages with a broad range of stakeholders to support science-based decision-making. Filip has a passion for communication and tries to keep up with the science in the fast-evolving field of agricultural biotechnology.

Lambert van Nistelrooij MEP @LvNistelrooij



Lambert graduated cum laude in social geography from the Catholic University in Nijmegen. At the age of 24 he started as a member of the municipal council. From 1982 to 2004 Lambert was a member of the Provinciale en Gedeputeerde Staten in the Dutch region of Noord-Brabant.

Lambert has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2004. As a member of the Dutch political party CDA, he is a MEP for the European People's Party. As an MEP he has focused on regional policy, research, innovation, energy and the Digital Agenda. Currently, he is a member of the Committee on Regional Development and a substitute member of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection. He is coordinator of the Intergroup on Active Ageing. Lately Lambert has been working on the European Structural and Investment Funds as the main negotiator, the European Fund for Strategic Investments as rapporteur, and the Digital Single Market. He was the rapporteur for the Biobased Industry (BBI) initiative, that will run from 2014-2020 to boost the biobased developments in Europe.

James Higgiston



James Higgiston, Agricultural Minister-Counselor, U.S. Mission to the EU/ FAS Brussels. Jim Higgiston joined the Foreign Agricultural Service in 1984 after graduating with a Master's Degree in International Trade and Finance from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. He joined the Foreign Service in 1987. Jim has served in Moscow (1988 - 1992), Warsaw (1997 - 2001), and Ankara (2002 - 2006). He has also held a variety of positions in Washington dealing with analysis, food assistance and trade policy. Since August 2010 Jim served as Deputy Administer for the Office of Foreign Service Operations (OFSO). As Deputy Administrator for OFSO, Jim was responsible for all FAS overseas operations which included 96 posts, 110 American officers and 320 Locally Engaged Staff with a budget of over \$90 million. His office was also responsible for recruitment, deployment and oversight of all USDA personnel stationed in Afghanistan. Jim arrived in Brussels in August 2014.

Prof. Diran Makinde



Diran Makinde is the immediate past Director, NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and now serves as Senior Advisor (ABNE) and based at the NEPAD Agency Head Office, South Africa. He was formerly the Director of the NEPAD West African Biosciences Network in Dakar, Senegal. He earned the degrees of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1976, a PhD in Veterinary Physiology from the University of Ibadan in 1986 and Diploma in Neurophysiology from Edinburgh University in 1981. Prior to joining NEPAD Agency, he was Professor of Animal Science at the University of Venda, South Africa where he also served a five-year term as Dean of the School of Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry (1997-2001). In addition, he taught at the universities of Ibadan (Nigeria), 1977-1991 and Zimbabwe, 1989-1995. His research interest is in the field of gastrointestinal physiology of monogastrics, which included such areas as digestibility and intestinal transport. He developed and applied these methodologies in risk assessment studies in agricultural biotechnology and biosafety. He has well over 45 publications in peer-reviewed journals locally and internationally, as well as several contributions in the form of books/ chapters in books. He is a C-rated scientist as evaluated (1998) by the South Africa National Research Foundation. He serves in several technical advisory boards on the continent and outside.

Dr. Mahaletchmy Arujanan



Mahaletchmy Arujanan is the Executive Director of Malaysian Biotechnology Information Centre (MABIC) and Editor-in-Chief of *The Petri Dish* – the first science newspaper in Malaysia. She has a degree in Biochemistry and Microbiology from Universiti Putra Malaysia, Masters in Biotechnology and PhD in science communication from University of Malaya. Maha is listed as the world's 100 most influential people in biotechnology by Scientific American Worldview 2015. She is also listed in the honorific list of Women in Biotechnology Law and Regulation as part of Biotechnology Law Report 2015 published by Mary Ann Liebert Inc, among 23 other women scientists and lawyers. Maha won the 2010 Third World Academy of Science Regional Prize for Public Understanding of Science for East, Southeast Asia and Pacific Region. She is actively involved in public understanding of biotechnology locally and internationally involving issues like policies, regulations, communication, business, ethics, religion and education. Maha sits on the National Bioethics Council and the Selangor Bio

Council and on advisory panels of a number of universities. She is also a trainer for BiotechCorp and the

Industry Cluster of Excellence (Ministry of Higher Education) to give career guidance to graduates. She is an Adjunct Lecturer at Monash University Sunway. She is also regularly invited to review biotechnology degree programmes at universities and sits on various committees and panels both at the national and international level.

Dr. Claude M. Fauquet



Claude Fauquet received his Ph.D. in biochemistry from University Louis Pasteur in Strasburg, France in 1974. Dr. Fauquet joined the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, as a plant virologist for 28 years, and served in Ivory Coast, West Africa for 14 years. In 1991, he co-founded the International Laboratory for Tropical Agricultural Biotechnology (ILTAB) at The Scripps Research Institute, California, with Prof. Roger Beachy. ILTAB was hosted by the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, St. Louis, MO, from 1999 to 2012. He also is a co-founder of the Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century (GCP21) in 2002, which he is now directing and whose goal is to improve cassava worldwide. Dr. Fauquet is an international leader in plant virology including taxonomy, epidemiology, molecular virology, and in gene-silencing as an antiviral strategy. In 2005 he developed the project called Virus Resistance Cassava in Africa (VIRCA), aiming at developing commercial cassava products for poor farmers in Africa and the first product is scheduled to be delivered to East African farmers by 2020.

He was Secretary of the ICTV (International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses) for 18 years and the editor of several ICTV Reports including the VIIIth ICTV Report in 2005. He published more than 300 research papers in reviewed journals and books. He is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, of the American Phytopathological Society and a member of the St Louis Academy of Sciences. In 2007, Dr. Fauquet was knighted “Chevalier de l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques” by the French Minister of High Education and Research.

Dr. Nevena Alexandrova-Stefanova



Dr. Alexandrova-Stefanova has twelve years of experience as researcher, research manager (EC Framework Programs 5, 6 and 7) and science-communicator in agricultural biotechnologies, biosafety, and knowledge-sharing issues on national and international levels. She joined FAO and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in 2008 as Agricultural research and biotechnology officer. Currently, her duties were extended to cover agricultural innovation systems (AIS) and knowledge-sharing for sustainable agricultural development in the region. The areas, where the programme is currently focused, are policy advice and practical approaches to provide better access to demand-driven knowledge, research and education, and services to smallholder farmers (men and women), including through information and communication technologies (ICTs); generation and adoption of sustainable technologies and frameworks (e.g. on biosafety) that would improve farmers' livelihoods and provide benefits for environment. Since 2008, Dr. Alexandrova-Stefanova led several projects aiming at strengthening capacities on agricultural biotechnologies and biosafety in Croatia, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, and currently in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan) and Azerbaijan. She was responsible for studies and projects on strengthening functional linkages of agricultural research and extension services, and collaborative effort for all actors in the AIS including through ICTs.

She has a B.Sc. in Molecular Biology; M.Sc. in Plant molecular biology and physiology; M.Sc. in Pedagogy; PhD in marker-assisted plant biotechnologies; post-doctoral fellowship in biosafety for developing countries (ICGEB, Trieste, Italy).