

Preface

Founded in 1933, CIEC (Centre International Engrais Chimique) has accomplished to be one of the oldest scientific organizations that promote the implementation of scientific knowledge in the field of fertilizer research into crop production. The 24th International CIEC Symposium in Coimbra (Portugal) hosted by the University of Coimbra (UC), the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research of the University of Coimbra (IIIUC) and the Centre for the Research and Technology of Agro-Environmental and Biological Sciences (CITAB), Vila Real takes place first time in its history in Portugal. The bandwidth of topics that could have been addressed is extremely wide as are soil and climatic conditions which challenge agricultural production. Perhaps even more striking is the variety of specialty crops which are grown on the Iberian Peninsula such as grapevine, cork oak, eucalyptus, olives, almonds and citrus fruits. Accordingly the symposium has been thematically dedicated to plant nutrition and fertilizer issues for specialty crops. Environmental conditions, for example drought, salinity and micronutrient deficiency cause regularly stress conditions for plants. In a climatically changing environment the demands towards agricultural production will increase distinctly in future and the maintenance of crop productivity will be an important contribution towards global food security. Specialty crops deliver regularly a higher economic return than common plants, but are also more demanding with view to a crop-specific input of resources. Here, the significance of targeted fertilizer applications with regard to type, rate and timing will be of prime relevance for growing high-yielding specialty crops of prime quality. Advanced precision agriculture technologies as for instance remote sensing devices are a big promise towards an efficient use of fertilizers which benefit farmers, natural resources and environment. In invited lectures *Prof. Shiping Wang* (Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, P.R. China), *Prof. João Santos* (Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Vila Real, Portugal), *Dr. Elke Bloem* (Julius Kühn-Institut, Institute for Crop and Soil Science, Braunschweig, Germany) and *Prof. Dr. Javier Tardáguila* (University of La Rioja, Logroño, Spain) present cutting-edge research and state-of-the-art facts on the different themes mentioned above. Last, but not least we would like to thank the local organizers who make the 24th CIEC Symposium an unforgettable event for all participants!

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