

CSIR General News

CSIR researchers and innovators win awards at conference

CO₂ lasers; plant antibodies; human language technologies; an alternative communication framework; addressing banana diseases; and satellite use for camouflage: these are the award-winning technology areas profiled at the CSIR Research and Innovation Conference held on 27 and 28 February 2006. More than 20 papers and 40 posters were presented by CSIR researchers at the CSIR International Convention Centre covering a diverse range of subjects. Scheduled to coincide with the implementation of the CSIR's new focus, structure and activities, the conference showcased its current science and technology strengths, as well as the use of these in meeting national needs and priorities.

Two international experts, Professor Sir John Lawton and Professor Wilson Sibbett, delivered the keynote addresses. Professor Sir John Lawton, a renowned ornithologist and Chairperson of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, focused on global environmental change and unsustainable development. Professor Wilson Sibbett, a world authority in laser physics and photonics and Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of St Andrews, shared his views on new avenues for research and technology in photonics.

The following paper presentations received awards:

- The design and optimisation of a CO₂ laser for laser ultrasonic applications by Dr Andrew Forbes (CSIR National Laser Centre)
- Novel platforms for essential biomolecules: Expression of antibodies in plants by Dr Rachel Chikwamba (CSIR Biosciences).

The award for the best paper presented by a young scientist went to Dr Marelle Davel (Meraka Institute) for her South African case study on the bootstrapping of pronunciation models and the use of human language technologies.

Dr Louis Coetzee and Martin Pistorius (Meraka Institute) received the award for the best poster, titled: GNApp - An Open Source Augmentative and Alternative Communication Framework.

Two awards were made in the category of posters by young researchers, namely to Johannes Baumbach (CSIR Defence, Peace, Safety and Security) and Sani Gumede (CSIR Biosciences). The titles of the posters and the teams involved in the research are:

- Using Satellite Imagery to Evaluate Land-based Camouflage Assets - Johannes Baumbach and Minette Lubbe
- Bacillus spp as a Biological Control Agent against Panama Disease in Banana - Sani Gumede, Petrus van Zyl, Blessed Okole and Raj Laloo

When announcing the names of the winners, Dr Dave Walwyn, CSIR Group Manager: Research and Development, commented on the high quality of papers and posters presented over the two days. The panel of judges consisted of Walwyn, Dr Alex Weaver, Johan Eksteen, Venantio Mzenda and Hilda van Rooyen. It is planned to make the CSIR Research and Innovation Conference an annual event.

To access the abstracts of the winning papers and posters, visit the [conference website](#).



Pictured at the CSIR Research and Innovation Conference from the left: One of the keynote speakers - Dr Wilson Sibbett (Wardlaw Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of St Andrews), Dr Sibusiso Sibisi (CSIR CEO) and Dr Dave Walwyn (CSIR Group Manager: R&D)

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