

International experts on maize insect pests share latest research at global event



Participants of the 29th Conference of the International Working Group of *Ostrinia* and other maize pests (IWGO) of IOBC Global in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, from 28 to 30 October 2025 (Photo MARDI, Serdang, Malaysia)

More than 80 of the world's leading experts on maize insect pests have shared the latest research findings on sustainable pest management at the [29th International Working Group of *Ostrinia* and other maize pests \(IWGO\) Conference](#) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The [Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute \(MARDI\)](#), and the International Organization of Biological Control (IOBC) – the parent organization of IWGO – co-hosted the conference.

Scientists from 15 countries, including Australia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, the USA, Kenya, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, and some countries in Europe, came together for a scientific knowledge exchange at the MARDI Auditorium on their headquarters in Serdang.



Opening ceremony in the presence of Dr Haji Mohamad Zabawi bin Abdul Ghani, Director General of MARDI (Photo MARDI, Serdang, Malaysia)

The scientific programme spanned much of the current research on maize insect pests worldwide. Eight thematic sessions covered advances in *Bt* resistance monitoring and management, breeding and host-plant resistance, integrated pest management (IPM) for piercing-sucking insects, biological control innovations, and sustainable approaches for fall armyworm control in both smallholder and large-scale systems. Scientists presented on a range of topics from mechanistic studies (analysing the cause-and-effect relationships) on insect resistance and behavioural regulation to applied work on UAV-based natural-enemy releases, farmer-centred IPM packages, and radar-based migratory insect surveillance.

Across three days, around 60 oral presentations were delivered, complemented by nine posters featuring work on cross-resistance, improved monitoring tools, native biocontrol agents, entomopathogenic microbes, and professional training in plant health. Together, the programme reflected a collaborative community tackling maize pest challenges with both scientific rigor and practical innovation.

Meanwhile, several younger scientists attended the conference and presented their research topics, and three of them received the IOBC Global Travel Award: (1) Precious Mpofo from the International University of Science & Technology at Palapye in Botswana; (2) Nancy Ngoma from CAB International (CABI), Lusaka in Zambia and (3) Ongani Chirwa from Zambia Research and Development Centre (ZRDC) and Honda Farmers' Agricultural Camp, Lusaka in Zambia.



IOBC Travel Award winners (from left to right) Precious Mpofu (Botswana), Nancy Ngoma (Zambia) and Ongani Chirwa (Zambia) (Photo KCS, Delémont, Switzerland)

The conference was convened by Dr Ulli Kuhlmann from CABI in Switzerland, and co-convened by Dr Dominic Reisig from North Carolina State University, USA, and Dr Feng Zhang from CANI in East & South Asia.

MARDI contributes to global agricultural knowledge

The opening ceremony was officiated by Dato' Dr Haji Mohamad Zabawi bin Abdul Ghani, Director General of MARDI, who said, "MARDI contributes to global agricultural knowledge through publications, conferences, and collaborations with leading research institutes and universities worldwide. Its close collaboration with IOBC Global, IWGO and CABI is a good example of international partnership in addressing invasive species through science, advancing agricultural research, and ensuring food security."

How science can help protect maize

The IWGO is the oldest global working group of [IOBC](#) which has been meeting since 1968 to see how science can help protect maize. Maize is a globally important crop that remains crucial in 2025 for food, animal feed, and increasingly industrial uses like biofuels. Its importance is underscored by its role providing at least 30% of the food calories to over 4.5 billion people in 94 low and lower middle-income countries. Dr Kuhlmann said, "The IOBC-Global - IWGO platform continues to play a vital role in fostering global partnerships and facilitating the exchange of ideas and experiences that advance sustainable agricultural practices worldwide. Many of the most serious maize pests are invasive alien insect species. Therefore, strong trans-regional and global collaboration is needed to tackle them. As proposed and agreed, the IWGO convenors will organize the next and 30th IWGO Conference – potentially in Hungary - in October 2027".