

## GET TO KNOW OUR SPONSORS: KNPV

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### Could you introduce yourself shortly?

I'm Peter Bonants. I worked for many years at Wageningen Plant Research. There, I was part of the management team of the Bio-Interactions and Plant Health business unit, and I was also a senior researcher in the field of diagnostics, particularly focused on quarantine plant diseases. I retired last year, and then I decided to become the secretary of the KNPV, a role I've now held for about a year. But before that, I had already been a member of the association for many years.

### Could you explain what the KNPV is and what purpose it fulfills?

The KNPV has been around for more than 125 years. It stands for the Royal Netherlands Society of Plant Pathology, so it's a group of people involved in plant pathology and crop protection in all its various forms. We have members from universities, companies, and also from government agencies, often regulatory bodies. We even have a few international members, and in total about 600 members, including a large number of students. They can all take part in various activities.

What we mainly do is bring the discussion around crop protection to the forefront. We don't promote a specific opinion, because our members come from many different backgrounds and each has their own perspective on crop protection. What we aim to do is initiate that conversation. As mentioned, we have several activities for that. For instance, we usually organize two themed meetings per year. These often take place at the WICC (Wageningen International Congress Centre) in the heart of Wageningen. We invite a wide range of speakers, from scientists to industry experts, practical advisors, and even growers or farmers interested in the topic.

Last year, for example, the theme was climate change: how does it affect plant diseases? What challenges or opportunities do these diseases and pests face due to climate change? These events are free for members. After the sessions, we usually have drinks, and sometimes a dinner or lunch as well.

### Apart from the theme gatherings, what else does the KNPV organize or host?

We also have working groups. These are more focused on specific aspects of crop protection. For example, there's a working group on Phyto-Bacteriology. It includes people researching bacteria in the context of crop protection – not only harmful plant pathogenic bacteria, but also beneficial bacteria that might protect plants.

In total, there are about 8 or 9 working groups. Some of them hold their meetings in English, making them especially suitable for PhD candidates or international students who don't speak Dutch. These groups meet once or twice a year under the KNPV umbrella, but they are fairly autonomous when it comes to deciding their own programs and selecting speakers.

In addition, every five years we organize a major crop protection event, the 'Gewasbeschermingsmanifestatie' — the most recent one was in March, held in Ede. This event is a collaboration with industry and the Willie Commelin Scholten Institute, which is based in Utrecht. The event lasts all day and we invite over 300 participants from businesses, government, the public, and research organizations. Throughout the day, we focus on various crop protection themes. For instance, we explored microbial life in the soil — something that is gaining significance in crop protection. We also covered biodiversity: how can we enhance it? As well as new technologies being applied in crop protection, such as drones, cameras, artificial

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intelligence, etc.

During the day, all aspects of these three themes are addressed in different sessions, with space for discussion in between. We also hold a poster session where people can present their research.

### **And you also got your own magazine, right?**

Yes, we publish a membership magazine called 'Gewasbescherming' (Crop Protection) 6 or 7 times a year, covering all sorts of crop protection topics. In addition, we manage a scientific journal that we actually own: the European Journal of Plant Pathology, published by Springer. Because we own that journal, we receive royalties, which allows us to keep membership fees low and organize all these activities every year. It's an important way to fund the association and to ensure that as many people as possible can take part in everything we offer.

We also award several prizes. The KNPV Prize is given every 4 to 5 years to someone who has made a significant contribution to crop protection in the broadest sense — this can be someone from industry or from research. The recipient is selected by a jury. Then, every two years, we have the Jan Ritzema Bos Prize, which is for PhD students who have either just completed or are about to complete their PhD. They submit a short abstract describing their research and how they plan to effectively present it. That, in a nutshell, is the KNPV.

**Thanks for this elaborate explanation! To round it off: What do you think is the most valuable thing the KNPV has to offer for students?**

I think the most valuable aspect is the network. Among our members are plant breeding companies, government representatives, people involved in biological control, universities of applied sciences — you name it. It's a very interesting network for students,

especially if they're looking for an internship or a job. We also have international industry contacts. On the research side as well, our network is very broad. I've personally had contacts with the ministry, as well as various companies, the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA), and research partners. You'll encounter all of these people at KNPV events. So I would say: student membership is just €12.50 per year, but the value of the network is much, much greater.

**Then lastly, if students are interested, where can they go to?**

To our website: [www.knpv.org](http://www.knpv.org)



*Above: The logo of the KNPV*

*Below: A picture of Peter*



- Joran van der Molen