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## **Preface to the Special Issue 51 (3/4): Potato in a Changing World**

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In the United Nations' International Year of the Potato and 1 year after the 50th anniversary of the European Association for Potato Research (EAPR), the 17th Triennial Conference of the EAPR was held in Brasov, Romania, from 6 to 10 July 2008. The Triennial Conferences—organized by local organization committees under the auspices of the EAPR—are interactive forums where scientists and potato experts meet and share their thoughts and ideas, identify and explore solutions for potato problems and build new bridges between the different disciplines of potato science and between the various links in the potato chain.

The 17th Triennial Conference of the EAPR was organized by the National Institute of Research and Development for Potato and Sugar Beet in Brasov, Romania, under the leadership of its director Dr Sorin Chiru and with the enthusiastic and skillful support of the Institute's staff and the potato scientific community and potato industry of Romania. The Conference had the following theme: "Potato in a Changing World".

In a world confronted with global change and energy and food crises, the potato is the most important tuber crop. Potato is number three among the world's food crops. There are great expectations that the potato will maintain its position as an important source of food, of raw material for the food industry and for non-food industrial processing in the developed world. Moreover, international and national bodies develop policies through which the potato will strengthen its position as a food security crop in emerging countries and will thus play a significant role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

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The conference was attended by 345 participants from 42 different countries. Its programme included 15 plenary lectures, 72 oral and 145 poster presentations, four workshops, three scientific excursions and several business meetings. This special double issue of *Potato Research* contains 14 contributions to the plenary sessions. Workshop reports will be published in a following issue.

The topics of the plenary lectures reflected the theme of the conference in the framework of the different sections of the Association. After an introductory address with the background of potato production and use in Romania the following topics were dealt with:

1. Potato and climate change;
2. Dietary and consumer aspects of potato and its variability in phytonutrient content;
3. Advances in functional genomics in potato;
4. The use of exotic germplasm and breeding strategies;
5. New insights from the physiology, agronomy and pathology of the potato crop;
6. Potato storage;
7. Crop modelling.

The guest editors are very grateful to the authors, to the reviewers for their prompt and knowledgeable comments, and to the journal support staff of Springer for skillful and rapid processing of the submissions. Their joined efforts made it possible to publish the proceedings of this Triennial Conference less than half a year after it took place.