

11th World Potato Congress, Dublin

30th May – 2nd June

Report for the Douglas Bomford Trust

Last 30th May – 2nd June I had the magnificent chance to attend the 11th World Potato Congress that was taking place in Dublin, Ireland, as part of my PhD project. That was my first in-person conference outside Cranfield University for which I was really excited. I went there with my main supervisor, Dr MCarmen Alamar and I just can say that both had a nice time there!

The project I am working on is entitled “Reducing potato losses by creating a predictive model for black dot disease”. It is a 3-year project and co-funded by Albert Bartlett, one of the biggest suppliers of fresh potatoes in the UK, and Cranfield University. Currently, I am in my second year of this journey, and I could not be happier!! I am mainly looking at different pre- and postharvest



Figure 1. Venue of the World Potato Congress Ireland 2022 - Royal Dublin Society.

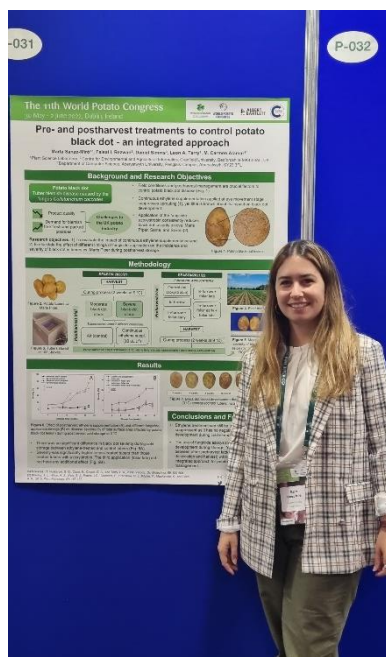


Figure 2. Poster sessions.

factors that affect potato black dot, and evaluating the development of the disease during postharvest cold storage. However, I am doing different tasks what makes my research very dynamic. For example, as black dot is a fungal disease, I am also interested in knowing how the fungus looks like on the Petri dishes, under which conditions it grows best, etc.; and for that, I am doing some microbiology experiments alongside my postharvest studies.

When I heard about the “World Potato Congress” I just thought “this is my opportunity”. I wanted to know more people working and researching in this field, I wanted to know what the latest research on potatoes is, so I did not

doubt in sending the abstract and hope for the best. Luckily, I got accepted for a poster presentation, so I felt grateful!

The first day of the conference we had the registration and interesting plenary sessions. We had the chance to listen to Dr Qu Dongyu, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.



Figure 3. Dr Qu Dongyu, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in the WPC 2022.

I have to say that this Congress was both industry and academia related, which caught my eye because you get to know other perspectives outside academia, and you realise how close both sectors can work to help advance research and knowledge.

On the second and third days we attended the talks; the topic of the conference was “The Changing World of the Potato”, so the talks were about the future of the potato, taking into account all the challenges the world is facing right now. Some of the sessions were really to reflect and think. We had also the technical talks and I was amazed on how much research is going on! It was useful to learn what the state-of-art of the potato research is. Also, we had poster sessions where I met people who are the authors of the papers I have been reading so far, which was exciting! I think it is



Figure 4. Networking - with Mr. Tayto.

really useful to discuss your work with different people from different institutions, countries and even backgrounds to know what they think and receive quick feedback - it also motivates me!

Apart from that, what I really enjoyed were the networking sessions!! Again, as this was a world congress there were people from all around the world...Amazing!! I met colleagues from Chile, Australia, the States, Ghana, Germany, Spain, etc. and every single one of them was studying something different about potatoes!!

I have to say that organisation of the Congress was impeccable! We had a 2km fun run (it was at 6:30am in the morning) but it was worth it! The weather was nice, so we enjoyed it, it was a great start to the day! The conference dinner was held in the Guinness factory in Dublin, which was



Figure 4. Conference dinner in the Guinness factory.

wonderful! We had amazing views and we learnt a lot about the beer process (so not everything during the conference was about potatoes...!).



Figure 5. Fun run 2km.

The last day was dedicated to the technical tours. There were different options, and I chose to visit Wilson's Country, Ireland's leading potato brand, which gave me an overview of the potato market in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. The next stop of the tour was the famous Titanic Museum in Belfast. It was a really nice day where I still got to know more people in the sector, and I learnt a lot!



Figure 5. Technical tours: Wilson's Country and Titanic Museum.

Attending this congress made me realise that I like what I am doing, it gave me a "booster" of motivation which sometimes you need. For sure whilst doing a PhD you have your ups and downs, but this was definitely a super "up"! I also wanted to thank the Douglas Bomford Trust for their financial support, so I had the chance to attend and make the most of this international conference.