



IFTBC | INTERNATIONAL FORAGE
& TURF BREEDING
CONFERENCE 2026

12-16 October 2026, Qingdao, P.R. China

PROGRAM





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INTERNATIONAL FORAGE
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12-16 October 2026, Qingdao, P.R. China

Monday, 12th October 2026

Time	Presentation
	<i>Session Chair: German Spangenberg</i>
9:00	OFFICIAL OPENING
10:00	Opening Keynote: <i>"Advances and challenges in genetic improvement of forage and turf"</i> Zengyu Wang Qingdao Agricultural University CHINA
11:00	BREAK
11:30	<i>"When two (genomes) are more than one: a lesson from introgression breeding"</i> David Kopecky Institute of Experimental Botany CZECH REPUBLIC
12:00	<i>"Genomic breeding in forages: faster gain, lower cost"</i> Noel Cogan La Trobe University and Agriculture Victoria AUSTRALIA
12:30	LUNCH
	POSTER SESSION
	<i>Session Co-Chairs: Zengyu Wang & Marco Pessoa</i>
13:30	Keynote: <i>"Improved forages for sustainable development of livestock production in low- and middle-income countries"</i> Chris S Jones International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) KENYA



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14:30	<i>"A 100-year tradition of breeding forages in Uruguay: Integrating genetic innovation for sustainable pastoral systems"</i> Rafael Reyno National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA) URUGUAY
15:00	<i>"Next-generation tropical forage breeding for productive, resilient, and low-emission livestock systems"</i> Rosa Jauregui Alliance Bioversity International and International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) COLOMBIA
15:30	BREAK
16:00	<i>"Mutation breeding of forage and turf in Japan"</i> Hitoshi Nakagawa Jiangsu Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Nanjing and National Agriculture and Food Research Organization JAPAN
16:20	<i>"Development of salt-tolerant alfalfa (Medicago sativa L.): integrating molecular analysis, salinity screening, and field-based evaluation"</i> Bill Biligetu University of Saskatchewan CANADA
16:40	<i>"Exploration of germplasm resources and breeding of new cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass (Poa pratensis L.)"</i> Xiaoyang Sun Qingdao Agricultural University CHINA
17:00	WELCOME RECEPTION & POSTER SESSION
18:00	DINNER



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Tuesday, 13th October 2026

Time	Presentation
Session Co-Chairs: Chris Jones & David Kopecky	
9:00	Keynote: <i>"Pan-genomic and pan-transcriptomic resources to advance forage grass breeding"</i> Bruno Studer ETH Zürich SWITZERLAND
10:00	<i>"Providing genomic resources for tropical forage breeding and genetics"</i> Marco Pessoa Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) BRAZIL
10:30	<i>"Forage sorghum genomics and molecular breeding"</i> Haichun Jing Chinese Academy of Sciences CHINA
11:00	BREAK
11:30	<i>"Sainfoin breeding for Western Canada: past and future"</i> Hari Poudel Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada CANADA
11:50	<i>"Forage breeding and grassland research in Eastern Hokkaido: achievements and future perspectives"</i> Toshihiko Yamada Hokkaido University JAPAN
12:10	<i>"Genetic resources evaluation and utilization of cold tolerance in Pennisetum purpureum"</i> Xinquan Zhang Sichuan Agricultural University CHINA



12:30	LUNCH
	GROUP PHOTO
<i>Session Co-Chairs: Charles Brummer & Haichun Jing</i>	
13:30	Keynote: <i>"Phenomics – looking at forages through a new lens"</i> Kevin F Smith University of Melbourne and Agriculture Victoria AUSTRALIA
14:30	<i>"Beyond model species: haplotype-resolved assembly of highly heterozygous forage grass genomes"</i> Yutang Chen ETH Zürich SWITZERLAND
15:00	<i>"Molecular mechanisms underlying key agronomic traits in alfalfa"</i> Chuanen Zhou Shandong University CHINA
15:30	BREAK
16:00	<i>"Assessing alfalfa drought resilience in Western Canada through multi-year field evaluation and 2D root phenotyping"</i> Tyler Peterson University of Saskatchewan CANADA
16:20	<i>"Linking genome diversity to root architecture and growth dynamics in perennial ryegrass to enable predictive breeding techniques"</i> Shane Fagan Queen's University of Belfast NORTHERN IRELAND, UK



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16:40	<i>“Genetic programming outperforms vegetation indices for UAV-based forage phenotyping in Megathyrsus maximus”</i> Guilherme Niederauer University of Campinas (UNICAMP) BRAZIL
17:00	POSTER SESSION AND RECEPTION
18:00	DINNER



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Wednesday, 14th October 2026

Time	Presentation
Session Co-Chairs: Bruno Studer & Rosa Jauregui	
9:00	Keynote: <i>"Can we keep alfalfa in cropping systems?"</i> Charles Brummer University of California-Davis USA
10:00	<i>"Learned from the Green Revolution: alfalfa trait improvement in the gene editing era"</i> Jiangqi Wen Oklahoma State University USA
10:30	<i>"Gene editing and haploid breeding technologies in alfalfa"</i> Hao Lin Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences CHINA
11:00	BREAK
11:30	<i>"Unlocking the genetic diversity of cowpea (Vigna spp.) for low-methane climate-resilient livestock systems"</i> Meki Muktar International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) ETHIOPIA
11:50	<i>"From allelic diversity to compatibility prediction: evolutionary insights into self-incompatibility in forage grasses"</i> Daniela Kupper ETH Zürich SWITZERLAND
12:10	<i>"Stigma-recognition-stage responses contribute to self-incompatibility in alfalfa"</i> Wanjun Zhang China Agricultural University



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	CHINA
12:30	LUNCH
	POSTER SESSION
Session Co-Chairs: Iain Donnison & Chuanen Zhou	
13:30	Keynote: <i>"Forage plant seed microbiomes, discovery and applications"</i> Tim Sawbridge Agriculture Victoria AUSTRALIA
14:30	<i>"Microbiomes for resilient and sustainable forage and bioenergy grasses"</i> Kerrie Farrar University of Aberystwyth (IBERS) WALES, UK
15:00	<i>"Endophytes for better pastures: insights, innovations, and delivering value on farm"</i> Kathryn Guthridge Agriculture Victoria AUSTRALIA
15:30	BREAK
16:00	<i>"ROS homeostasis and secreted proteins orchestrate Epichloë–grass symbiosis and drought resilience"</i> Lei Lei Lanzhou University CHINA
16:20	<i>"Doing more with less nitrogen: a fast regulatory programme behind nitrogen-use efficiency in perennial ryegrass"</i> Rao Kovi Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) NORWAY



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16:40	<i>“Mechanisms of symbiotic nitrogen fixation and salt-tolerant nodulation in Melilotus”</i> Jiyu Zhang Lanzhou University CHINA
17:00	POSTER SESSION AND RECEPTION
18:00	DINNER



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Thursday, 15th October 2026

Time	Presentation
Session Co-Chairs: Kevin Smith and Jiangqi Wen	
9:00	Keynote: <i>"Perennial grasses as bioenergy feedstocks and for the net zero transition"</i> Iain Donnison University of Aberystwyth (IBERS) WALES, UK
10:00	<i>"Molecular breeding for drought tolerance and high yield in alfalfa"</i> Zhipeng Liu Lanzhou University CHINA
10:30	<i>"Forage plant breeding contributions to livestock production in Argentina"</i> Gustavo Schrauf University of Buenos Aires ARGENTINA
11:00	BREAK
11:30	<i>"Germplasm resource evaluation and breeding of Leymus chinensis"</i> Gongshe Liu Chinese Academy of Sciences CHINA
11:50	<i>"Genetic improvement of Paspalum dilatatum: Transfer of resistance to Claviceps paspali through interspecific hybridization and apomixis-mediated genome addition (AMGA)"</i> Javier Do Canto National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA) URUGUAY



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12:10	<i>"Harnessing natural resistance in Paspalum regnellii and RNAi biotechnology for sustainable Mahanarva spp. spittlebug management in forage breeding"</i> Isabela Begnami University of Campinas (UNICAMP) BRAZIL
12:30	LUNCH
	POSTER SESSION
Session Co-Chairs: German Spangenberg and Zengyu Wang	
13:30	<i>"TpMYB81 promotes isoflavone biosynthesis in red clover by directly activating key structural genes"</i> Xiaojia Li Lanzhou University CHINA
13:50	<i>"The ZjbHLH022-ZjCCR4 module from Zoysia japonica positively regulates salt tolerance via enhanced lignin biosynthesis"</i> Zhifang Zuo Qingdao Agricultural University CHINA
14:10	<i>"Genome editing of ZmNYC1 reduced chlorophyll degradation and enhanced crude protein content in Zoysia matrella"</i> Hwan May Ng University of Miyazaki JAPAN
14:30	<i>"Subzero acclimation: physiological, transcriptional, and chromatin-level analysis of subzero hardening in perennial ryegrass"</i> Shuizhang Fei Iowa State University USA



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14:50	<i>“Rethinking Italian ryegrass as climate change reshapes its potential in the Baltic region”</i> Kristina Jaskune Lithuanian Research Centre for Agriculture and Forestry LITHUANIA
15:10	<i>“The seasonal pivot: feed quality versus methane intensity changes of two tropical forage grasses”</i> Ermias Habte International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) ETHIOPIA
15:30	OFFICIAL CLOSING
16:00	POSTERS DISASSEMBLY
17:00	CONFERENCE BANQUET



Friday, 16th October 2026

Time	Tour Options
9:00	DEPARTURE HOTEL HAITIAN FINANCIAL CENTER FOR CONFERENCE TOURS
9:00	TOUR A: <i>"tba"</i>
9:00	TOUR B: <i>"tba"</i>
9:00	TOUR C: <i>"tba"</i>
12:00	RETURN TO HOTEL HAITIAN FINANCIAL CENTER