

NEW MEMBERS OF THE ISF SECRETARIAT

Nyon, Switzerland – It is with great pleasure that the International Seed Federation announces two new members of its Secretariat beginning on 4th January 2021. Both will join the team led by Dr Rose Souza Richards, ISF Seed Health Manager.



Chantra Eskes, Technical Lead for the International Seed Health Initiative

Chantra has a PhD in Toxicology, from the Faculty of Medicine, Lausanne, Switzerland. She has over 20 years of experience in the development, optimisation, validation and regulatory implementation of biochemical and cell based test methods for toxicological assessment. She had among others been responsible for the validation of a number of test methods and acted as the lead and contributing author of a number of international test guidelines and guidance documents.

In her own words, she is “an enthusiastic, proactive, goal- and service- oriented person that particularly enjoys to take into account and integrate diversity of opinions in order to reach scientific-driven goals and support policies and harmonization.”

Chantra will be responsible for the daily management of ISHI’s activities, including the management and steering of the Technical Group of the ISHI organization, meetings and events, plus she will also provide technical feedback on method development/validation and contribute to streamlining ISHI’s activities in conjunction with the Technical Coordinator ISHI and the Seed Health Manager among other activities in ISHI.

She will be home-based in Switzerland, with regular visits to the ISF office in Nyon as needed.



Benedicte Lebas will support as consultant to the Regulated Pest List Initiative (RPLI)

Benedicte Lebas has a PhD in Biological Sciences from the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK. She has experience in plant health diagnostic and in particular in the detection and identification of viruses, viroids, and phytoplasmas from plants for planting (nursery stock) and seeds for sowing using a range of diagnostic techniques (e.g. biological indexing, electron microscopy, serology, molecular). She has experience providing technical advices in plant virology including diagnostic advices (sampling and testing) for import and export of plants for planting and seeds for sowing, validation of procedures (e.g. reverse transcription – polymerase chain reaction for high plains virus), exotic response preparedness and contingency plans (e.g. soil-borne wheat mosaic virus).

Benedicte will intensively support ISF to spearhead activities required for the development of new regulated pest lists for identified priority seed crops; to coordinate the activities of the teams developing regulated pest lists for seed crops; to participate in the critical review of scientific papers and prepare the information for publication in the ISF database; and also to review and update regulated pest lists in the database at regular intervals.

She lives in Belgium, and will make regular visits to the ISF office in Nyon as needed.

Who else is in the team?



Joyce Woudenberg, Technical Coordinator for ISHI-Veg

Joyce joined ISF in March 2019 as Technical Coordinator for ISHI-Veg. She has a PhD from Wageningen University. The title of her thesis is Restyling *Alternaria* and is about the taxonomic status of *Alternaria* and its related genera. It involved molecular and morphological studies, generating data on the whole-genome and transcriptome sequence to search for new loci to discriminate species within the section *Alternaria*, and using microsatellite markers to investigate the genetic diversity and distribution of *Alternaria* isolates from the indoor environment in the USA.

Following a postdoc at Westerdijk Fungal Biodiversity Institute at the Applied and Industrial Mycology Department, Joyce joined Plantum, the Dutch seed association, as an Associate on a joint project of Plantum and the Dutch NPPO called Strengthen Export Guarantees.

Joyce brings to her new job technical skills in molecular techniques such as DNA/RNA isolation, Real-Time PCR, DNA sequencing, sequence analysis and serological techniques among others, in addition to knowledge of the seed industry and the regulatory context in which ISHI-Veg functions. With over 30 scientific publications to her credit she also brings experience in reviewing manuscripts for several journals, and not least planning and organising skills. She has two small girls to whose needs she will devote her time two half days of the week.

She is based at Naktuinbouw in the Netherlands.