

Press Release

11th June 2010

International Award for APC Scientists

Four scientists from the Alimentary Pharmabiotic Centre (APC) (apc.ucc.ie) have been awarded the IDF Elie Metchnikoff Prize in Microbiology for 2010. The Prize is named in honour of the recipient of the 1908 Nobel Prize and is awarded in recognition of their contribution to the study of lactic acid bacteria.

The Prizewinners are Dr Catherine Stanton and Professor Paul Ross of Teagasc, Moorepark and Professors Colin Hill and Gerald Fitzgerald of the Microbiology Department, UCC. All four scientists are Principal Investigators in the APC and in Food for Health Ireland (FHI; www.fhi.ie) and each has recently been awarded a D.Sc from the National University of Ireland for their published work. Professors Hill and Ross have also been elected as Members of the Royal Irish Academy. The prize was presented at an award ceremony at the IDF Symposia on Science and Technology of Fermented Milk and on Microstructure of Dairy Products in Tromsø, Norway, on 9 June 2010.

The four scientists have been collaborating on lactic acid bacteria research for over 20 years. These bacteria have two very significant roles that impact on our daily lives; they are the bacteria which are used in the production of fermented foods such as cheeses and yoghurts (a very significant food sector in Ireland) and they also inhabit the human gut, and are consequently often used as probiotic bacteria to improve human health. The main contribution of the research team lies in improving our understanding of how these bacteria can be controlled and even improved, both in industry and in the human body. Although much of their work has focused on the fundamental biology of these important bacteria, the four scientists have been very engaged with industry in Ireland and abroad. "One of the most exciting elements of our collaboration has been seeing our fundamental research being translated to industrial applications" states Professor Hill.

Professor Fitzgerald expressed his pleasure at the international recognition of the group. "Collaborating with Paul, Catherine and Colin has been very stimulating and productive, and it is apposite that this announcement comes just after the launch of the Teagasc-UCC Food Alliance last Friday."

All four scientists are keen to acknowledge the enormous contributions of the many scientists and students who have participated in the research and the financial support from DAF, EI, SFI, the food industry and others.

The award

The IDF Elie Metchnikoff Prize 2010 has been created by the International Dairy Federation (IDF) and its partner organizations, Institut Pasteur and the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) with the support of the following partners from the industry: Yakult, Danone Research, Nestlé, Mead Johnson, DSM Food Specialties, Danisco, Chr. Hansen, and the California Dairy Research Foundation. The key objectives of the initiative are to recognize and celebrate outstanding scientific discoveries in the fields of microbiology, biotechnology, nutrition and health with regard to fermented milks and to promote further research and innovation in the dairy industry.

For further information please contact: Ms Marie McSweeney, Press Officer University College Cork; Tel (353) 21 4902371 or mobile (353) 86 0845182