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INTRODUCTION

The ever-increasing trend towards a global market has affected many industries, although agriculture appears to be influenced to the greatest extent, seemingly inseparable from political, social, economic and trade disputes across the globe. Although the use of pesticides has allowed increased levels of food production, their potential for deleterious effects on human health and the environment continues to provoke a high public profile. Stringent regulatory controls exist to ensure that pesticides are used in a manner that does not cause unacceptable risks to users, consumers or the environment. The global nature of agriculture affects us all, allowing temperate countries to import fresh tropical and out of season products all year round, while exacerbating problems with an increased risk of introducing alien pests and diseases. Consumers are now more aware of ethical issues related to food production in developing countries, including pesticide safety. We now have a greater awareness of the pesticide residues in the food eaten and its country of origin.

Over the last three decades the Pesticide Application Group has provided a forum for researchers from around the world to discuss progress with the development of pesticide application technology. During this time great advances have been made to improve the efficacy and safety of pesticides, resulting in lower doses of pesticides in the field, leading to lower residue levels in produce and the environment. Scientific and engineering advances can be exploited more readily with the regular contact between the many research groups working with crop protection and production techniques.

Once again it is promising to see the wide range of international papers presented at this years conference emphasising the excellent research being done across the diverse disciplines to improve application techniques and pesticide safety. International collaboration is easier now than in the early days of the Pesticide Application Group, for a variety of reasons. However, this collaboration has also been necessitated by the perilous state of many national funding programmes, which can no longer support the national infrastructures of R&D expertise and facilities. Application technology has a future in global agriculture, be it with traditional synthetic pesticides, or the newer biopesticides and biocontrol agents. New problems will arise as agriculture continues to develop, and it is the responsibility of researchers to resolve seemingly intractable issues as they arise.

Each application conference develops its own themes reflecting the contents and talking points of the papers submitted. As in previous years, drift reduction and International Standards have a high profile. This year we have a large number of high quality papers from around the world, which will ensure that this conference will continue to be a major source and interchange of knowledge on pesticide application matters.

I would like to thank all members of the Pesticide Application Group (Simon Cooper, Jerry Cross, Ben Magri, Alison Patey, Libby Powell, Tom Robinson, David Stock, Bill Taylor, Evan Thornhill and Peter Walklate) for their invaluable help with the groups activities and in helping with organising the sessions for this conference. I also send my thanks to Kirsty Hall, who has recently stepped down from the Group. Last but not least I thank Carol Millman, Rachel Cousins and Michelle King of the AAB office for organising the conference and preparing this volume of *Aspects of Applied Biology*.

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REFERENCES

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ENQUIRIES

Enquiries concerning the technical content of chapters should be addressed directly to the authors but other matters should be directed to the AAB Office, c/o Warwick HRI, Wellesbourne, Warwick CV35 9EF, UK.

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