

## Penn State Joins International Phytobiomes Alliance



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The [International Alliance for Phytobiomes Research](#) (Phytobiomes Alliance) is pleased to announce that Penn State has joined the organization as a sponsoring partner.

An international, nonprofit consortium of academic institutions, large and small companies, and governmental agencies, the Phytobiomes Alliance was established in 2016 to coordinate public-private research projects on various aspects of agriculturally relevant phytobiomes.

Phytobiome is a term that relates to a plant (phyto) in a specific ecological area (biome). It includes the plant itself, all micro- and macro-organisms living in, on, or around the plant -- such as microbes, animals and other plants -- and the environment, including soil, air, water and climate.

Penn State joins the Phytobiomes Alliance five months after the creation of a university-wide [Microbiome Center](#) dedicated to the study of microbiomes, the communities of microorganisms found in living (people, plants) and nonliving (soil, ocean) environments.

"Strategic partnership with the Phytobiomes Alliance is timely for both Penn State and the Alliance because of the excitement in the Microbiome Center around phytobiomes and the international reach and potential partnerships offered by the Alliance," said Carolee Bull, interim director of the Microbiome Center and head of the Department of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology at Penn State.

Bull explained that several subdisciplines have emerged in the Penn State Microbiome Center, with the Phytobiomes Strategic Networking Initiative funded by the College of Agricultural Sciences serving as one of the strong teams fueling the center. This group is energized by faculty that recently have joined the phytobiomes team or that are being sought as part of an asynchronous microbiome-cluster hire. In addition, this group is teaming with the well-regarded Penn State Plant Biology Graduate Program to host the 21st Plant Biology Symposium on Phytobiomes in May 2018.

Representatives of Phytobiomes Alliance sponsors serve on the Coordinating Committee. This committee identifies research, resource and technology gaps, establishes priorities, and develops strategic plans to achieve Alliance goals.

Kellye Eversole, Phytobiomes Alliance executive director, welcomed Penn State as a new sponsor.

"Microbial communities are key components of phytobiomes," she said. "By bringing into the Alliance

its broad range of expertise on plant microbiomes, Penn State will help us identify priorities and develop research agendas to meet the challenges of tomorrow's agriculture."

Over the next decades, agricultural research and food, feed and fiber production must make a paradigm shift to meet the future demands of a projected 2050 world population of 9.6 billion in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

By establishing a foundation of knowledge on how phytobiome components interact and affect each other, the Phytobiomes Alliance envisions that all farmers, ranchers, growers and foresters will have at their disposal predictive and prescriptive tools to choose the best combination of crops, management practices and inputs for a specific field in a given year.

### **About the Phytobiomes Alliance**

The Phytobiomes Alliance is an international, nonprofit alliance of industry, academic, and governmental partners created in 2016. The goal of the Phytobiomes Alliance is to understand, predict and control emergent phenotypes for sustainable production of food, feed and fiber on any given farm. The Phytobiomes Alliance is sponsored by Bayer CropScience, The Climate Corporation, Monsanto, INRA, Eversole Associates, BioConsortia, Indigo, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, NewLeaf Symbiotics, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, The American Phytopathological Society, and the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation.

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