

Researchers from 33 countries presented in Bulgaria innovative developments of natural substances in favor of human health

Author(s): Растителна защита
Date: 31.05.2025 *Issue:* 5/2025



An international conference on the research and development of natural substances for medicine, pharmacy and the cosmetics industry was held in Bansko. At an official ceremony, the Bulgarian scientific team and organizer of the event welcomed nearly 230 guest researchers from 33 countries. Prof. Milen Georgiev, PhD, head of research teams at the Center of Plant Systems Biology and Biotechnology (CPSBB) and the Institute of Microbiology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), Prof. Penka Petrova, PhD, President of BAS, together with Assoc. Prof. Kalina Alipieva, PhD, Director of the Institute of Organic Chemistry with Centre of

Phytochemistry (IOCCP) at BAS and Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy at the Medical University – Plovdiv, Prof. Georgi Momekov, PhD, opened the conference, which was held over four days from 27–30 May 2025.



Researchers from four continents arrived in Bulgaria to participate in the event and exchanged experience in the discovery and development of natural substances for the creation of food supplements, medicinal products and cosmetic products. Cutting-edge studies were presented related to the isolation, identification and application of bioactive compounds derived from plants and food products, with potential and proven beneficial effects on human health.

Natural products play an increasingly significant role in pharmacy and medicine worldwide, with growth observed in their use in both traditional and modern medicine. Around 25% of medicines on the global market are of plant origin. In 2024, the global herbal medicines market was valued at EUR 214.5 billion and is expected to reach EUR 402 billion by 2032. In Europe, the market is leading with a share of 44.55% in 2024, with a marked increase in interest in phytotherapy and the integration of herbal products into healthcare. According to the World Health Organization, about 80% of the population in developing countries relies on traditional medicine, including herbal remedies, for primary healthcare.

There is also a growing trend in the cosmetics industry. In 2024, the global market for herbal cosmetic products was valued at EUR 83.3 billion and is expected to reach EUR 286.1 billion by 2033, with an annual growth rate of over 13%, with the skin care segment holding the largest share. All this is due to the progressive increase in investment in research and development activities for the creation of effective herbal formulations. Some of the most advanced scientific studies were presented precisely in Bulgaria during the conference.” This was emphasized by Prof. Milen Georgiev, PhD, organizer of the large-scale forum.

The main focus of the conference was the role of natural substances in conducting innovative therapies and in the prevention of a wide range of health conditions and diseases such as ageing, diseases of the central nervous system, oncological diseases, as well as for improving immunity, longevity, healthy ageing, etc.



Prof. Robert Verpoorte, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Plant Cell Biotechnology at Leiden University, the Netherlands

Among the guest speakers at the event were Prof. Robert Verpoorte, PhD, Emeritus Professor of Plant Cell Biotechnology at Leiden University, the Netherlands, and Prof. Jean-Luc Wolfender, PhD, a leading scientist at the University of Geneva and head of a research team on phytochemical bioactive natural products.

The conference featured poster exhibitions, workshops and lectures with the participation of scientists from Bulgaria, the USA, Italy, Spain, Serbia, Switzerland, Poland, Greece, Ireland, Austria, the Netherlands, Turkey, Morocco, Pakistan, Israel, China, Taiwan, Brazil, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, India, Argentina, South Africa and others. Research institutes and universities from over 20 countries supported the event with representatives in the scientific committee.