

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019



THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

The Hebrew University
of Jerusalem

The Robert H. Smith Faculty of
Agriculture, Food and Environment



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OUR KNOWLEDGE YOUR GROWTH

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*"It was a great experience—
a good combination of knowledge, professionalism and fun."*

Participant in the Council for Higher Education Summer Program of 2019



International MSc class of 2018-2019

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE DEAN FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND HEAD OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Dear Friends,

We are happy to present to you the 2018-2019 annual report of the International School of Agricultural Sciences of the Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



The International School of Agricultural Sciences plays an important role in the Hebrew University's strategic move to expand its international footprint. Specifically for our school, the global challenges of climate change and population growth faced by many countries increase the importance of food production without compromising the environment and the quality of the food.

We believe that the knowledge disseminated through our programs is responsible for improving not only the lives of our students but also those of their community members and the residents of the surrounding communities. We feel that our impact spreads via our alumni and touches the lives of many others.

Part of our mission is to keep in touch with our alumni. This year, it included an alumni reunion, which coincided with the oral seminars and graduation ceremony; 17 of our alumni attended the reunion. We also granted seed money to three projects in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya. Dr. Aliza Stark, co-academic head of the Nutritional Sciences program, visited an MSc alumnus conducting a thesis abroad in Malawi, while Prof. Sameer Mabjeesh continues to work closely with an alumnus in Jamaica.

In September 2019, 23 students completed their MSc studies in the Plant Sciences and Environmental Quality Sciences programs; 13 students partook in the second Viticulture and Enology program; and a new cohort of 25 students started their studies in the Animal Sciences and Nutritional Sciences programs. We are proud to note that, this year, 80 percent of our graduates found an advisor and transferred to the thesis track, with 13 of our graduates continuing to the PhD program in our Faculty. The large number of graduates who were able to advance in their studies reflects the high academic level of our programs.

I hope to continue working hand in hand with our donors to promote our role in knowledge transfer to different parts of the world, and assist struggling countries with the means to reduce hunger and extreme poverty.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Aliza Fleischer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aliza" and the last name "Fleischer" clearly distinguishable.

Professor Aliza Fleischer

3,100

The International School has over 3,100 Facebook friends.

129

Our students come from 129 countries.

300

Over 300 international students have graduated from the International MSc programs.

80%

Over 80 percent of International MSc graduates transfer to a thesis track.

OUR VISION

The Robert H. Smith Faculty's teaching and research activities have always played a central role in advancing agriculture to strengthen Israel's economy while training tomorrow's scientists and agriculturists. The Smith Faculty's mission is to protect and rehabilitate the environment while increasing food production and reducing world hunger; mobilize agriculture to meet human health needs; improve the quality and purity of agricultural products; and share the benefits of Israeli research and innovation with other nations.

The International School is dedicated to disseminating the Smith Faculty's knowledge and expertise throughout the international community by providing opportunities to acquire advanced academic knowledge and observe up-to-date practical applications. The educational programs encourage students to explore new fields and cultures, exchange ideas and experiences, contribute to capacity building and problem solving, and create partnerships for future cooperation.

New Academic Head of Environmental Quality Sciences

Dr. Tamara Polubesova was appointed the new academic head of the MSc program in Environmental Quality Sciences, replacing the former head, Prof. Yael Mishael.

Expanded Presence on Social Media

Since our last annual report, the International School's Facebook page has increased its number of "likes" by 32 percent, currently reaching 3,100 people around the world. We attribute this growth to our continuous maintenance of the page and posting of interesting and informative news and photos.

We opened an Instagram account and intend to invest more efforts to expand our audience reach on this platform and on LinkedIn.

The School's website was redesigned this year to highlight more of our international activities, such as internships and student-exchange programs.

below: International School website homepage



Classroom Renovations

After last year's major renovations, the Faculty is now rebuilding cabin 10. The refurbishment will conclude by March 2020, after which our students will enjoy a brand new 70-seat classroom and a state-of-the-art smart seminar room.



Rebuilding cabin 10

Collaboration with the Faculty's Student Union

In the previous annual report, we added to our agenda the need to build a closer relationship with the Faculty's Student Union (SU) for the benefit of our students. We are happy to report that, indeed, substantial progress was made this year. Some of the achievements were as follows: SU announcements were translated to English and mailed to all international students on campus; "Latin Night" at the SU pub, The Dripper, organized by our MSc student Mario Correa; outdoor movie night on the main campus lawn; Christmas evening at The Dripper and a Christmas tree in the library; hosting of our students for Passover dinner by Israeli students and Faculty employees, arranged by the SU.



Hosting students at Passover dinner

Exchange students

The International School hosted four exchange students from the University of Hohenheim, Germany, and AgroParisTech, France. The exchange students joined the International MSc programs in Plant Sciences and Environmental Quality Sciences for a full semester.

As part of the Hebrew University's efforts to increase its international activities, the Faculty has decided to focus on student mobility, resulting in a significant increase in the number of outgoing exchange students. We are happy to announce that the amount of Israeli Faculty students who studied abroad doubled in comparison to the previous year: 12 students spent one semester at leading universities in Ireland, Poland, Germany, Australia, China, Denmark and the Netherlands. We will continue to promote and facilitate exchange programs and help as many students as possible benefit from this unique opportunity.



Israeli Faculty students Maya Schmal and Inbal Padan at Shanghai Jiao Tong University



Prof. Aliza Fleischer with exchange students at Wageningen University

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs)

The Faculty has MOUs with many leading agriculture universities, such as the University of Hohenheim, Germany, and AgroParisTech, France. In 2019, we signed an MOU with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden, and are currently working toward agreements with other institutes.

Faculty Student Wins Prize in ELLS Conference

The Euroleague for Life Sciences (ELLS) and the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment have enjoyed a fruitful cooperation over the last five years. This collaboration includes summer courses, student-exchange programs and conferences, attended by students from Israel and other countries. The Faculty's ELLS membership provides our students with the opportunity to study at top-notch science and agriculture institutions and to combine academia and internationality with a great personal experience.

ELLS holds an annual scientific conference for member universities, where students have the opportunity to present their research, meet students and researchers from other countries, and hear lectures by science, agriculture, food and environment experts from academia and industry.

The 2019 ELLS Scientific Student Conference took place at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and one of the Master's students who presented their research there was Nofar Pinker from the Faculty. She studies biotechnology under the mentorship of Dr. Nurit Argov-Argaman, from the Faculty's Department of Animal Sciences, and Dr. Giorgi Shtenberg, from the Agriculture Engineering Institute, ARO-Volcani Center.

At the conference, Nofar took part in the Innovations in the Food Chain panel and spoke about the research she participates in – "Detection of Bovine Mastitis Biomarkers in Milk by Porous Silicon Optical Biosensors". Her presentation earned her the third-place prize.



Nofar Pinker, winner of the third-place prize in ELLS Scientific Student Conference



"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

Benjamin Franklin



THE INTERNATIONAL MSc PROGRAMS

The International Master of Science programs are 12-month, accelerated, non-thesis degrees in one of four fields of study: Plant Sciences or Environmental Quality Sciences, held biennially in even years, and Animal Sciences or Nutritional Sciences, held biennially in odd years. To earn the degree, students are required to complete 40 course credits. Excelling students may apply to transfer to a thesis track at the Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment. In addition, the International School offers an 18-month Master of Science in Viticulture & Enology.

2018-2019 PROGRAMS

MSc in Plant Sciences and MSc in Environmental Quality Sciences

The class of 2018-2019 consisted of 14 Plant Sciences students and 10 Environmental Quality Sciences students, hailing from 15 different countries. Myanmar and the Philippines were represented for the first time in our MSc programs. In addition, we hosted four exchange students from Germany and France. The students completed the year with an impressive class average of 89, with over 80 percent of them accepted to a thesis track and now continuing their studies at the Faculty.

Environmental Quality Sciences Program

The international Master of Science in Environmental Quality Sciences, academically headed by Dr. Tamara Polubesova, prepares students to address the challenges of global environmental issues: development of alternative water and energy resources, water and soil pollution treatment, waste recycling, agricultural intensification, environmentally sustainable pest control and plant protection, and related economics.

Plant Sciences Program

The international Master of Science in Plant Sciences, academically headed by Prof. Alon Samach, prepares students to become leading professionals in present and future agriculture and adapt their new knowledge to local conditions in their home countries. Students acquire advanced insight and skills in the scientific basis and principles of crop plant production, the environmental impact of agricultural activity, the analysis of specific cropping systems, the provision of solutions to practical problems and the adaption of appropriate solutions to various situations.

MSc in Viticulture & Enology

The international Master of Science in Viticulture and Enology, academically headed by Prof. Zohar Kerem, is the first MSc degree of its kind to be approved by the National Council for Higher Education of Israel. The biennial, 18-month program spans four consecutive semesters and is comprised of theoretical studies on campus and practical hands-on learning in the vineyard and winery. Students also participate in a professional workshop overseas and are offered the opportunity to intern at a commercial winery in Israel or abroad. We are proud to say that all 14 graduates of the class of 2017-2018 are currently working in the viticulture and enology sector.

The second class of this unique program opened in February 2019 and includes ten Israeli and three international students.



International MSc in Viticulture and Enology class of 2017-2018

SHORT-TERM COURSES (SUMMER PROGRAMS)

ELLS (Euro League for Life Sciences) Summer Program: Mediterranean Diet – from Genes to Health

The Euro League for Life Sciences is a network of leading agriculture and science universities cooperating in the fields of Natural Resource Management, Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Life Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Food Sciences, and Environmental Sciences. The Faculty of Agriculture has been a member of this prestigious network for the past five years, offering two-week summer programs to students from network universities.

The summer program “Mediterranean Diet – from Genes to Health” was held for the second time at the International School of Agricultural Sciences on June 23–July 4, 2019, under the academic coordination of Prof. Oren Froy. It earned high evaluations from participants and attracted the maximum number of students. The 30 biochemistry, food engineering and nutrition students hailed from around the world: Germany, the Netherlands, China, Israel, Sweden, New Zealand, Greece and Turkey. The participants studied different topics related to the Mediterranean diet, visited the Biochemistry and Food Science Institute’s labs on campus, participated in a Mediterranean diet cooking workshop, prepared goat cheese, and went on professional and sightseeing trips. Alongside academic learning, the students enjoyed social activities such as “the amazing race” and a summer party at the pool.

As a result of our prolific cooperation with the ELLS network, a bilateral agreement with Wageningen University & Research, the Netherlands, one of the world’s leading agricultural universities, was signed in 2018. This agreement includes academic staff and student exchange. We are also happy to announce that we will be hosting the ELLS annual spring meeting in March 2020.



Participants in the ELLS Summer Program of 2019



Participants in the Council for Higher Education Summer Program of 2019

Council for Higher Education Summer Program: “Effluents – Reclamation, Irrigation and Environmental Implication, and Effects of Biotic and Abiotic Stresses on Agricultural Crops”

From July 7–August 8, 2019, 23 students from China and India participated in a short-term study program incorporating academic, experimental and cultural elements, conducted under the auspices of the International School of Agricultural Sciences in collaboration with Israel’s Council for Higher Education. The program, academically coordinated by Dr. Anurag Dagar and Mr. Evyatar Mordechay, included two advanced agricultural science courses, selected from the Smith Faculty’s course list for their relevance to international agriculture. The two courses, which earned the participants five HUJI credits, were taught by experienced members of the Smith Faculty. In addition to classroom instruction, students gained hands-on experience and participated in professional field trips to observe practical applications of the course material. Alongside academic learning, the students enjoyed sightseeing and social activities. One participant in the summer program chose to return and study toward her MSc in Prof. Oded Shoseyov’s lab.

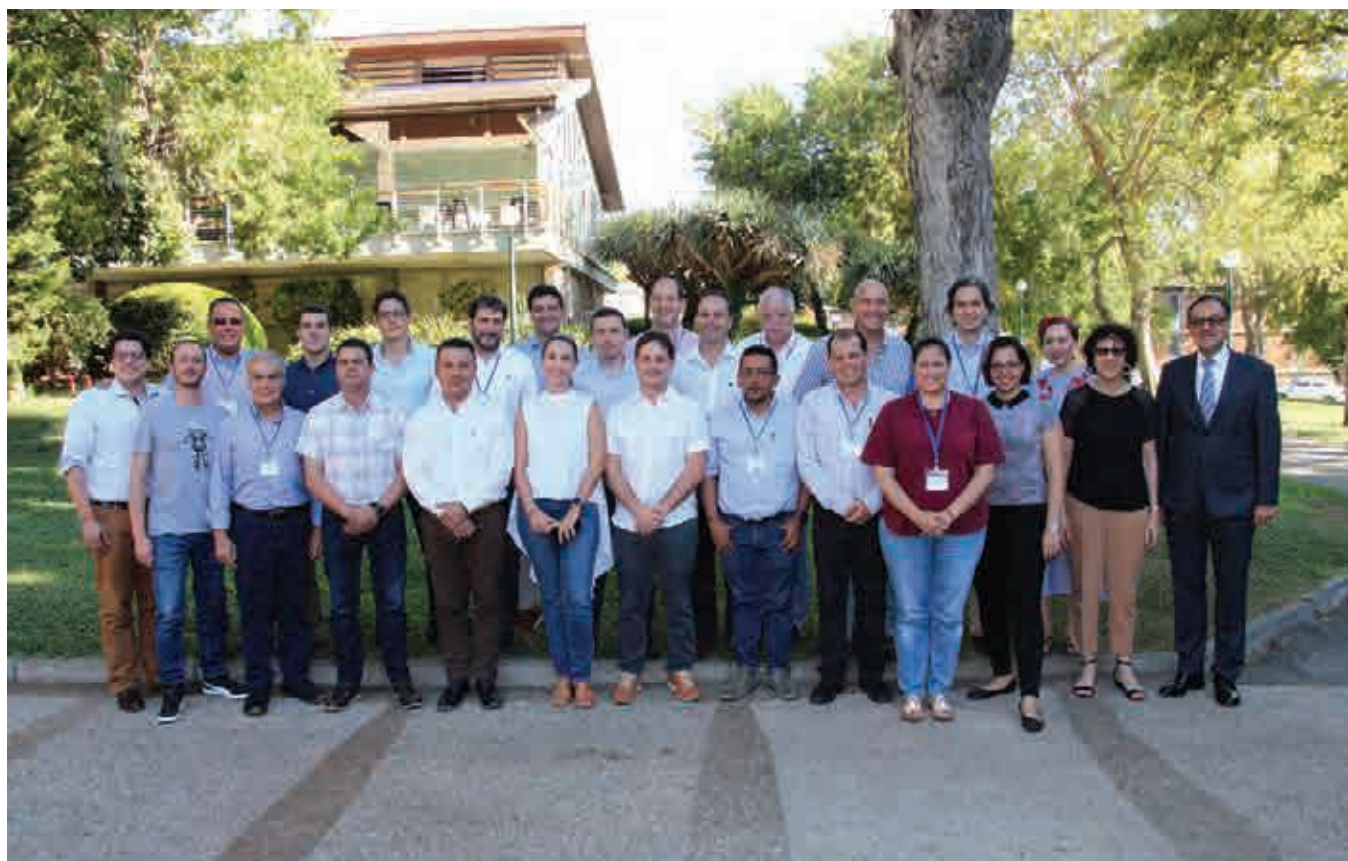
*“Excellent course with well-organized lectures and field trips.
The lecturers were highly specialized; I will really recommend it
to anyone interested in attending these type of courses
in Israel without any reserve.”*

Participant in the ELLS Summer Program of 2019

TAILORED PROGRAMS

Comfama Agtech Mission

On August 18–22, 2019, the International School of Agricultural Sciences hosted an Agtech Mission of professionals from Comfama, a major Colombian group focused on creating social impact and economic growth within Colombian businesses and society. The diverse curriculum included lectures about water management, nutrition, agro-tourism, agricultural marketing, the dairy sector in Israel and more, complemented by informative and engaging tours in these sectors. The participants also visited the Faculty's patented startup Coleplant, a publicly traded company, and heard a lecture about the Israel high-tech sector. On the last day of the course, they visited Jerusalem's holy sites. H.E. Carlos A. Morales, Colombian Ambassador to Israel, attended the closing ceremony and a festive dinner party. The course was a great educational and cultural experience, enjoyed by all the participants. We look forward to future cooperation with our friends in Colombia.



Participants in the Comfama Agtech Mission with H.E. Colombian Ambassador to Israel



*"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating.
Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family."*

Kofi Annan



SEMINARS AND VISITS

Imperial College London Student Visit

On March 27, 2019, we hosted 52 students from Imperial College London (ICL), UK, as part of a “Tech-Trip” organized for them by the Israel Society of ICL. The visitors learned of the latest research conducted at the Faculty, including innovations of FaculTech, the student entrepreneurship club; enjoyed a tour of the campus; visited the Insect Genetics Lab and the Metabolic Unit for Small Ruminants (the Faculty’s experimental goat pen); and heard a lecture about wine and olive oil, complete with tastings. The visit was so successful that three students returned to the Faculty for a summer internship and one student applied for a PhD, which will begin in January 2020.



British Ambassador Visit

On July 10, 2019, we hosted H.E. British Ambassador to Israel, Neil Wigan, who met with Prof. Benny Chefetz, Faculty Dean; Prof. Aliza Fleischer, Vice Dean for International Affairs and Head of the International School of Agricultural Sciences; and Prof. Zohar Kerem, Academic Head of the MSc in Viticulture & Enology program, who gave the ambassador a taste of the program's wine. In Addition, the ambassador met with our interns from Imperial College London, who shared their experiences with him.



H.E. British Ambassador to Israel with Faculty members and interns from Imperial College London

Ghanaian Ambassador Visit

On May 22, 219, we hosted H.E. Ghanaian Ambassador to Israel, Hannah Ama Nyarko. She visited the Animal Sciences Institute, accompanied by Prof. Aliza Fleischer, Vice Dean for International Affairs and Head of the International School of Agricultural Sciences, and Dr. Merav Fichman, from the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition, and heard of the research done on campus.

Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina Student Visit

On November 18, 2019, 14 MSc Agriculture students from Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina, Peru, visited the Faculty and participated in a fascinating seminar about precision agriculture.

The program included a series of lectures on water management, plant sensing and plant diseases, and visits to research labs, the plant-sensing laboratory, the iCORE greenhouse and the Phytotron.



Nigerian Tertiary Education Trust Fund Visit

On November 27, 2019, we hosted a delegation of 13 directors and members of the Nigerian Tertiary Education Trust Fund and representatives of several leading Nigerian universities. The objective of the visit was to explore the possibility of collaboration in the areas of research and development. The delegation members learned about research conducted at the Faculty, heard lectures about poultry and plant sciences, visited the Metabolic Unit for Small Ruminants (the Faculty's experimental goat pen) and met PhD students from Nigeria.



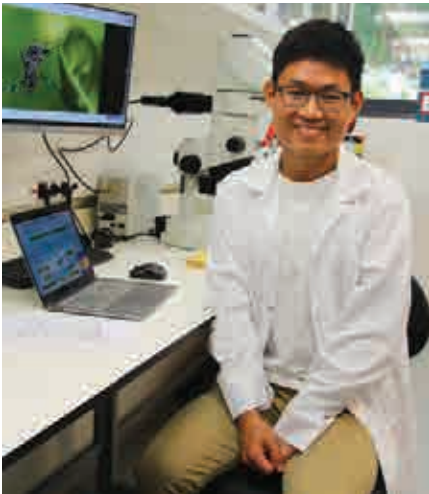
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In the summer of 2019, we inaugurated our internship program. Seven interns from Imperial College London, UK, University of British Columbia, Canada, and MIT, USA, joined the research groups of various Faculty labs, gained professional experience and participated in organized summer activities with our summer-program students. The British interns had the chance to meet H.E. British Ambassador to Israel, Neil Wigan, who visited the Faculty during this time.

[Here is a summary of their experiences in their own words:](#)

Goh Chen Gang, Imperial College London

Interned in the lab of Dr. Philippos Papathanos, Department of Entomology



Being on the HUJI Rehovot campus and in other parts of Israel has been an eye-opening experience. Beyond the realistic yet exciting research done here, the sincerity and hospitality of Israeli people has made this 10-week journey a socially enriching one. Best summer experience so far!

Josh Derrick, MIT

Interned in the lab of Dr. Jonathan Friedman, Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology



Working in the Friedman Lab in Israel was not so different from working in a science lab in the United States. The graduate students still work crazy hours out of their own volition and there is a lot of geeking-out about math and graphs that would make regular people scratch their heads in confusion. That said, unlike past experiences in labs, I felt truly responsible for my own project, which was quite different from my supervisors constantly breathing down my neck in the US. This was quite liberating, and I hope my experiences in the future are similar.



International Programs Team Leader Meital Salmor with interns

Ananya Saraph, University of British Columbia

Interned in the lab of Dr. Yael Heifetz, Department of Entomology



My summer internship at the Hebrew University has been an amazing experience. I've had the opportunity to contribute to an entomological research project while immersing myself in the world of scientific research. I've also built lasting and meaningful connections with my fellow interns, the researchers I interacted with and the program coordinators at the university. This has definitely been one of the best summers I've had in a while!

Thibault Mercier, Imperial College London

Interned in the lab of Dr. Idan Efroni, Department of Plant Sciences and Genetics in Agriculture



It was an amazing opportunity to work and travel in a youthful and vibrant environment such as Israel.

MSC IN PLANT SCIENCES AND IN ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY SCIENCES 2018-2019 CALENDAR

Orientation Days and Breaking the Ice

Shortly after the new students arrived on campus, we held two days of orientation, ending with “breaking the ice” activities, led by a company with expertise in organizational management.



Tour of Jerusalem

We began the year with our traditional trip to the Old City of Jerusalem, led by a professional tour guide. A food-tasting tour of the Machane Yehuda market added flavor to the educational, fun-filled day.



Visit to Rahan Meristem Research Center and the City of Acre

Students of the Biotechnology for Agricultural Crops course visited Rahan Meristem, located at Kibbutz Rosh Hanikra, with their teacher Prof. Arie Altman. Rahan is the first commercial tissue culture laboratory in Israel, an international center for research and consultation for the banana industry, and a hub of expertise in plant propagation and the rooting of olive, avocado and citrus plants. On the way back to campus, we stopped at the ancient city of Acre for a sightseeing tour.



Annual Joint Event with IMPH and Glocal

Every year, we arrange a networking event with the Hebrew University's Glocal International Development Master program (Glocal) and International Master of Public Health (IMPH) program. This year's Joint Event was hosted by IMPH in Jerusalem. Aside from the networking activities, Dr. Emily Silverman of the Hebrew University's Geography Department's Urban Clinic facilitated an interesting lecture and thought-provoking activity on the theme "Public Spaces".



Hanukkah on Campus

International students joined Israeli students and faculty members on the main lawn of the campus for Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremonies led by a Chabad rabbi from Rehovot.



Christmas in Nazareth

We visited Nazareth to celebrate Christmas. We toured Christian sites with a guide, sang Christmas carols under the Christmas tree, tasted delicious local food and pastries, and joined other visitors in celebrating the spirit of the holiday season.



Tour of Shafdan Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Shafdan Wastewater Treatment Plant is a complex inter-regional system that collects, treats and reclaims municipal wastewater. The students were guided through the plant by Dr. Haim Chikurel, an early pioneer in wastewater reclamation in Israel and a co-founder of the Shafdan Plant, who currently teaches the Water Quality Workshop in our Environmental Quality program. During this tour, the students learned about the entire water recycling process first-hand.



Visit to BioBee Biological Systems and Bustan Shean Packhouse

Dr. Einat Bilu's Integrated Pest Management students visited BioBee Biological Systems, located on Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu, where they learned about the practical application of pest management theories taught in class. BioBee is one of the leading international companies in the field of biologically based integrated pest management, natural pollination, and medfly control. The company believes that biological pest control and natural pollination solutions are better for the environment and more sustainable than chemical solutions. The tour was followed by a visit to Bustan Shean packhouse, which specializes in orange storage and packaging.



Tour of Netafim at Kibbutz Magal

Dr. Effie Trifler took his Basic Irrigation class to visit the renowned “precision irrigation” enterprise Netafim, the world’s leading irrigation company, which is driving mass adoption of smart irrigation solutions to fight the scarcity of food, water and land.

Society for International Development (SID) Gala Event at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art

In January, the students were honored to attend the prestigious Global Impact Awards Gala, held by SID Israel at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. The event awarded Israeli ventures, nonprofits and individuals positively impacting lives in the developing world. The guest of honor was H.E. the President of Israel Reuven Rivlin.



Tu Bishvat

To celebrate Tu Bishvat, the “new year for trees”, the students enjoyed a fun, interactive activity that included playing different types of musical instruments, drumming on congas and dancing, followed by a cornucopia of dried fruit and nuts.



Arava Agricultural Exhibition and Open Day

Students of Dr. Nirit Bernstein's Mineral Nutrition of Higher Plants course visited the Arava Agricultural Open Day, where the latest agricultural innovations can be found. The annual agriculture fair presents current research and modern agricultural products, desertification solutions, precision irrigation systems, and crop-protection and fertilizer technologies.



Mishloach Manot Visit to Kaplan Hospital on Purim

A group of our MSc students donned Purim costumes and made *mishloach manot* (gift parcel) rounds at Kaplan Hospital, including singing and guitar playing.



Glocal and IMPH Graduation Ceremonies in Jerusalem

Several of our students attended the graduation ceremonies of the Glocal and IMPH Master's programs. It was also an opportunity for a final reunion with friends made during the Joint Event at the beginning of the year.



Annual International Meal

The International Meal, a multi-cultural banquet held annually at the International School, was a great success, especially with the addition this year of singing performances by the students. Dressed in traditional costumes, the students were delighted to prepare and present their delicious dishes.



Visit to Yad Vashem Museum

In our annual visit to Yad Vashem, the students learned about the Holocaust through a guided tour. The experience was both disturbing and enlightening for them, as they did not know much about this dark period in history.



Visit to Hishtil Nurseries in Ashkelon and the Negev

Our Plant Sciences students visited Hishtil Nurseries with Dr. Hagai Yasuor, who teaches the Advances in Vegetable Production course. Hishtil is a global nursery corporation that specializes in the production and sale of vegetables, herbs, seedlings and young plants.



Tour of Hazera Seeds Company

Hazera Seeds is a global leader in seed production and export. Using state-of-the-art technology, Hazera breeds, develops, produces and markets a wide range of vegetable crop seeds around the world. Ms. Lea Mazor and Dr. Etan Pressman, the Seed Production course teachers, took our students to Hazera to observe first-hand the seed production process from beginning to end.

Visit to Intel and MOP Lakhish

Dr. Jorge Tarchitzky took his Reclaimed Water and Environmental Aspects class to the south of Israel to visit the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's research and development center in Lakhish. The unique MOP campus conducts advanced research and experimental activities, combines R&D with hands-on agriculture, and offers training, courses, seminars, exhibitions and demonstrations for experienced and future farmers.



Tour of Agricultural Research Organization, Volcani Center

Students of the Reproductive Biology of Fruit Crops course, taught by Dr. Vered Irihimovich, and of the Post-Harvest Biology and Technology course, taught by Dr. Victor Rodov, were introduced to state-of-the-art research taking place in these fields at Israel's largest agricultural institute at Volcani Center, which conducts 70 percent of Israel's agricultural research.

A Moving Talk by a Holocaust Survivor

Dr. Zippora Gershon, who teaches Food Security in our Nutritional Sciences program, gave a poignant talk about her childhood experiences during the Holocaust to an audience of international students. Zippora's message of hardship, survival and resurrection, education and resilience was very relevant to our times, as could be gathered from the student's questions, which reflected current conflicts in their own countries and around the world.



Visit of Mrs. Evelene Wechsler

Mrs. Evelene Wechsler has been supporting scholarships for our students since 2012. In June 2019, she visited the Faculty with her son Eric and met Wechsler scholar Thomas Cobbinah.



Crop Management Workshop and Harvest Celebration

This year, we launched a Crop Management Workshop, taught by Dr. Eitan Pressman of Volcani Center, which saw international Plant Sciences students working alongside Israeli first-year Faculty students. Elder members of the Rehovot Ethiopian Jewish community, participating in a farm project initiated by Prof. Alon Samach, also took part in some of the course activities. In the summer of 2019, after learning how to grow and manage crops all year long, the students harvested their vegetables, celebrated with members of the Ethiopian Jewish community and enjoyed Ethiopian delicacies and coffee.



The 20th International MSc Closing Ceremony

Following an intensive year of studies, we celebrated the end of the two programs with the annual Closing Ceremony, on the Smith Faculty campus. The event was attended by more than 120 guests: Pears representative Dina Gidron, IMPH and Glocal staff, friends and families of the graduates, teachers, alumni on campus, and colleagues.

Among the VIP guests were H.E. Ambassador of Nepal, H.E. Ambassador of Myanmar and diplomatic representatives of the Embassies of China, the Philippines, Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana.

Alumna Gcebile Matsebula, from Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), gave a heartwarming and inspiring speech. The students thrilled the audience with a performance of the song Hallelujah, accompanied by the event's musical band.



H.E. Nepali Ambassador to Israel with International MSc graduates at the Closing Ceremony

Alumni Reunion

As part of our strong, enduring relationship with our Master's graduates, we held a one-week-long alumni reunion for the Plants-Environment classes of 2014/15 and 2016/17 in September 2019. Seventeen graduates from Ghana, Mexico, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Serbia, India, Nigeria and Tanzania attended the event. The reunion comprised both academic and social activities.

Throughout the week, the alumni participated in various events designed to assist them in making connections in academia, for entrepreneurship purposes and at work.

We opened the reunion with a social gathering of alumni and current international students living on campus. The evening included a delicious falafel dinner and good music. The next day, alumni had the opportunity to attend this year's oral seminars as an active audience. Pears Scholar alumnus Felix Ogunmokon (Plant Sciences), from Nigeria, gave the opening speech on behalf of the alumni. Felix is currently pursuing his PhD at the Faculty. The reunion ended with our 20th Closing Ceremony of the MSc programs in Plant Sciences and Environmental Quality Sciences.

Reunion events also included the following:

The Power of NLP for Effective Networking

Mr. Tamir Huberman, Yisum's Chief Information Officer, gave an inspiring talk about the NLP method, how it can help students network better, and how to take action with new initiatives.



“Spark Your Entrepreneurial Vision” Panel Discussion

Students and alumni learned how to spark their entrepreneurial vision and realize their dreams. The panel comprised Dr. Adam Abramson, founder and CEO of Farmster, a digital platform that connects smallholder farmers with local buyers without requiring Internet access; Dr. Daria Feldman, Co-Founder of Kinoko-Tech, a food technology start-up in the area of alternative protein that offers food products based on an edible mushroom tissue; and Mr. Hanan Lepek, founder and CEO of Senecio Ltd., a developer of AI and automation technologies fighting dengue, zika, malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases. The panel moderator was Mr. Tomer Malchi, Co-Founder and Executive Director of CultivAid, a company that emphasizes the need to develop knowledge-based infrastructure accompanied by professional development and to enable government agencies, local NGOs and stakeholders to facilitate the transfer of technology.



Tour of the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation

Alongside the academic activities, our alumni also enjoyed an enriching visit to the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation, situated in Jaffa. The center presents the incredible story of Israel, a nation of innovation, and highlights the variety of innovative fields, and the people behind them.





*"This summer school was very interesting to me
and I will never forget this experience."*

Participant in the ELLS Summer Program of 2019



MSc in Viticulture and Enology students harvesting grapes

MSC IN VITICULTURE AND ENOLOGY 2018-2019 CALENDAR

Winery Tours

Tours of wineries and vineyards are an intrinsic part of the program, enabling students to observe firsthand the practical application of course material. The wineries visited included Domaine du Castel and Yehuda in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem, Golan Heights in the north, and Barkan in central Israel.



Grape Harvesting at Soreq Vineyard

The MSc program covers all aspects of winemaking, from the vineyard to the bottle, including theoretical studies, experiential work at Soreq Vineyard and winemaking at its winery. During the summer, the students harvested the grapes they helped grow and produced their own wine.



Wine Microbiology Course

We had the pleasure of hosting Prof. Isabelle Masneuf-Pomerade, a guest lecturer from the Viticulture and Enology Department, Bordeaux Sciences Agro, France, who taught the Wine Microbiology course. Her research focuses on the microbial community from grape to wine and wine yeast genetics and phenotypes. The concentrated course included 20 hours of lectures and experimental wine tasting.



Grape Man Tasting Workshop

Students visited the Grape Man Education Center in Jaffa and participated in a workshop taught by the center's CEO, Haim Gan. The topics covered included wine tasting, evaluation and grading.



Sparkling Wine Workshop

Tali Sandovski from the Golan Heights winery, Israel's first female winemaker, taught a workshop on sparkling wine.



Wine Blending Workshop

Boutique winemaker Avi Feldstein, an important figure in the Israel wine industry, led a workshop on wine blending.



Trip to Bordeaux, France

The first cohort of the MSc in Viticulture and Enology had a unique experience in France, where they journeyed to for an intensive eight-day workshop on the terrior of Bordeaux. The curriculum comprised three days of academic courses at Bordeaux Sciences Agro and four days of touring vineyards and wineries around the region.

One of the trip's highlights was a visit to Château Laffite, hosted by the proprietor, Baron Eric de Rothschild. The visit included a tour of the Chateau's winery and a taste of their best wines, and concluded with a formal dinner.

The trip was successful and memorable, both for the knowledge acquired and for the introduction to the world of wine outside of Israel, and served as a capstone of the MSc program.



Publicity Event at Barkan Winery

Toward the end of the program, the students gathered for a publicity event and closing party at Barkan Winery. The celebration included a tour of the winery, a festive dinner and, of course, wine tasting.



Ram Kumar Shrestha, Nepal

MSc in Plant Sciences, Class of 2010-2011

Pears Scholar



“
**My stay in
Israel helped
me succeed in
my career.**


”

Soon after receiving my degree from the Hebrew University, I started my professional life in Nepal as an assistant professor at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science of Tribhuvan University. My exposure to industrialized agriculture and high-impact research facilities during my stay in Israel helped me succeed in my career. Currently, I am working on a research project called “Characterizing the Prevalence of Mycotoxins in the Value Chain of Crops and Livestock Feed” in Western Nepal. It’s a USAID-funded project intended to determine the prevalence of distinct types of mycotoxins present in the value chain of crops and animal feed and to reduce the possible health risk with appropriate intervention.

Parashuram Bhantana, Nepal

MSc in Plant Sciences, Class of 2006-2007

Coutu Scholar

A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a red zip-up jacket and dark trousers, stands in a lush green grove of orange trees. He is holding a branch with several ripe, yellow-orange fruits. The background is filled with more trees and foliage, creating a dense, natural setting.

It is my pleasure to be an alumnus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It is true that "I once was a student, but I am HUJI for life". After my graduation from HUJI in 2007, I completed another two-year MSc in Agriculture and Biotechnology for sustainable dryland development, at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. I then worked as a soil scientist in the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC). My research focused on the effect of carbon sequestration and climate change. Farmers were directly interlinked with the outreach program, and I enjoyed the position there. Now I am in China, pursuing a four-year PhD degree in citrus fertilizer reduction and fruit quality improvement. The highly appreciated help from the Faculty, including that of the staff at the International School, helped me reach this position.

Simon Ekwaro, Uganda

MSc in Plant Sciences, Class of 2014-2015

Fraser Scholar



Established a Demonstration Farm to Train Youth and Farmers in Uganda

I grew up in a remote village. Life was not easy, and my family struggled when cattle rustlers took our livestock and, later, when rebels attacked my region. I acquired great knowledge and skills during my Master's degree at the Hebrew University and returned to Uganda determined to practice what I had learned with the interest of benefiting other youth.

I set up my own vegetable demonstration plots in 2016, where youth (mainly school dropouts) came to learn, free of charge. I trained 15 youths in commercial vegetable farming, and ten of them are now engaged in practical commercial vegetable farming.


I then joined an NGO called AgriTech Talk Africa, where we train groups of youth and women in basic agricultural numeracy skills with the interest of improving production and food security in households. I have trained over 50 groups, and a number of these people have become mentors in their own communities.

As a response to the rampant tree cutting, a group of youth and I have decided to sensitize communities to the dangers of tree cutting. Each of us decided to plant a minimum of 5 acres of an eucalyptus-improved species clone. We have also encouraged each household to plant at least five trees per year.

Firesenbet Shibru, Ethiopia

MSc in Animal Sciences, Class of 2015-2016

Fraser Scholar

A man with short dark hair and a light beard, wearing a light-colored polo shirt, stands outdoors at night. He is holding a black smartphone in his right hand and a green book titled 'EXTENSIVE STUDIES' in his left hand. The background is dark with some foliage and a white plastic chair visible on the right.

I work at Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine as Chief Technical Assistant in the Department of Animal Science. I also actively participate in community services (consultation, training and demonstration), particularly in the areas of improved dairy and poultry production and development and improved feed production, management and utilization. I have also coordinated and taught two rounds of a training program, which has educated 305 urban and rural women on poultry production and management, dairy production and management, and small-scale fattening and beekeeping. I have prepared a research project entitled "The Effect of Application of Organic and Inorganic Fertilizer on Agronomic Performance and Nutritional Quality of Oats and Vetch Mixture in Jimma Zone", and am waiting for funding to start conducting the research. The knowledge and skills I gained at HUJI have helped me immensely to possess the capacity and commitment to facilitate knowledge transfer and upgrade my skills to serve our students efficiently.

Janerose Nasimiya Lusweti, Kenya

MSc in Nutritional Sciences, Class of 2013-2014

Pears Thesis Abroad Scholar



Published research article and conference presentation in 2017

The 2017 research article “Impact of Community-Based Nutrition Education on Geophagic Behavior and Dietary Knowledge and Practices among Rural Women in Nakuru Town, Kenya: A Pilot Study” summarizes the work of Pears Thesis Abroad Scholar Janerose Nasimiya Lusweti; Dr. Aliza Stark, her Faculty thesis mentor and co-academic head of the Nutritional Sciences program; Elizabeth Kamau-Mbuthia, her co-mentor in Kenya; and Dr. Sharon Iron-Segev, a teacher in the Nutritional Sciences program. The pilot study focused on geophagia, the deliberate consumption of rocks, soil, or clay, which is prevalent in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Health risks associated with this behavior include parasitosis, heavy-metal poisoning, nutrient deficiencies, and poor birth outcomes. The pilot study was designed to reduce geophagic practices and improve nutrition among rural Kenyan women.

This work was published in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior and presented by Janerose Nasimiya Lusweti at a conference of the Society for Nutritional Education and Behavior, as well as by Dr. Iron-Segev at the Annual Conference of ATID Dieticians and Nutritionists in Israel.

A photograph of Ayotunde Kolawole, a man with short dark hair, wearing a dark blue t-shirt and light-colored trousers. He is standing in a greenhouse, with rows of green plants visible in the background. He is wearing a lanyard with a badge around his neck. The greenhouse has a curved metal frame and a translucent covering.

Ayotunde Kolawole, Nigeria

MSc in Environmental Quality Studies, Class of 2014-2015
Pears Scholar

Winner of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African leaders in 2019

During my Master's research in Israel, I worked on the economic and environmental implications of wastewater reuse for irrigation in Africa. One of the recommendations stemming from my research was to offer poor rural environments access to potable water as a means to reduce poverty, and that Nigeria must not wait until freshwater becomes a limiting resource. This recommendation helped me win the Pears Foundation Seed Grant in 2016. My project has provided potable water to poor households in Nigeria. More than 500 rural households have benefited from this project.

I am currently teaching and studying toward my PhD at Ekiti State University, researching how Nigeria can harness her numerous available water resources to lengthen the cropping season.

Everything I have gained is a result of God helping me to secure funding from the Pears Foundation, my studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the wonderful people I came across over the course of my studies in Israel. My achievements today are a result of my studies in Israel.

Nissim Sroussi, Israel

MSc in Viticulture & Enology, Class of 2017-2018



**“
I was exposed to
a wide variety
of information,
traditional
and up-to-date
technologies.”**

After many years of growing vegetables and flowers, vineyards and tropical crops, as well as working as a scientist and senior lecturer and teaching agricultural courses around the world, I received the opportunity to study in the new MSc program in Viticulture & Enology at the Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture. During my studies, I was exposed to a wide variety of information about traditional and up-to-date technologies and technical manufacturing in Israel and around the world. In addition to expanding my horizons, I was able to apply this knowledge to my vineyard and my winemaking. The program gave me the tools to improve my professional practices and advance to a higher level of winemaking.



*"In Israel, a land lacking in natural resources, we discovered the greatest resource of all:
human capital, which is richer than any of the resources on earth."*

Shimon Peres



MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM HEADS

Prof. Alon Samach

Academic Head, MSc in Plant Sciences



This year, 14 students from ten countries (Mexico, Panama, Canada, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, India, Nepal and China) participated in our program. It was a great pleasure for me to get to know each of them and learn about their backgrounds, hopes and dreams for the future. It was not an easy year, with quite a lot of academic challenges, assignments and lectures. Although from completely different backgrounds, the students joined forces and worked as a team to help each other, enjoyed each other's company, and found time to better know and appreciate the uniqueness of each member of the group. This was the first year in which students in the Plant Sciences program had an all-year field course in the faculty farm, working together with Israeli BSc students, and neighboring a plot grown by elderly farmers who had immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia. I know that the elders, as well as the Israeli students, were very happy to share stories, experiences and laughs with the students from our program. I imagine the international students enjoyed getting to know more about Israelis and their love of agriculture through this course.

Dr. Tamara Polubesova

Academic Head, MSc in Environmental Quality Sciences



It was an enjoyable experience for me to teach the international MSc students and to follow the development of their scientific thinking and acquisition of professional skills. The students were highly motivated and hardworking, willing to gain knowledge they could not obtain in their countries and which permits them to continue their education by enrolling in PhD programs, or find a position in institutions and companies related to the optimization of environmental quality in their native countries. The students expressed their satisfaction with the program; they consider the curriculum and their learning very helpful for their future professional career. The knowledge acquired during their studies opens the door to their future professional growth, and, in this way, to the development of their native countries.

Prof. Zohar Kerem

Academic Head, MSc in Viticulture and Enology



In our first intake, we had 14 students, who were highly motivated to take part in this new program. By combining theoretical studies with hands-on work in the vineyard, we were able to give our students the foundations needed to understand the key concepts in grape growing and winemaking.

The students followed the full cycle of vinification, from the vineyard to the bottle. They not only studied this theoretically—but also actually produced wine. While an intensive program, it offers a unique experience, bringing together traditional and modern worlds. Our aim is to support and educate a new generation of skilled wine professionals. We have, thus far, greatly succeeded in this mission: all the students of our first cohort are currently working in the wine industry.

Prof. Oren Froy

Academic Head, ELLS Summer Program “Mediterranean Diet – from Genes to Health”



It is really a privilege for us to host students from different places in the world, to share our knowledge with them, show them our different methods, and hear from them about their academic experiences. It is always wonderful to meet people from other countries (for most of them, it was their first time in Israel) and, of course, we hope that due to what they've learned here and the people they have met, new future research collaborations with our students/professors will be formed.

The International School's activities and accomplishments are made possible by the generous support and continuing commitment of our donors and collaborators.

The International School thanks the following sponsors and organizations for their invaluable partnership.

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ELLS – Euro League for Life Sciences

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The International School of Agricultural Sciences of the Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has been providing English-language programs in the agricultural, food and environmental sciences since 1988. As the only faculty of agriculture in Israel, the Smith Faculty is the source for most of Israel's agricultural achievements.

More than 3,000 participants from around the globe have attended graduate degree programs and short training courses and workshops at the International School.



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