



Ohio State HCS News

HORTICULTURE & CROP SCIENCE IN VIRTUAL PERSPECTIVE - THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

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OARDC Honors HCS Faculty and Students



Tomato breeder/geneticist David Francis was honored with the OARDC 2006 Distinguished Junior Faculty Research Award.

Horticulture & Crop Science tomato breeder/geneticist **Dr. David Francis** and graduate students **Roel Rabara** and **Anton Prajitna** were honored for their work during Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) 2006 annual research conference April 20 in Wooster. "We're all very proud of the things that have been accomplished," said OARDC Director Steve Slack. "We're even prouder of the potential."

Honored with the 2006 Distinguished Junior Faculty Research Award, Dr. Francis was recognized for his leadership of OARDC's [tomato breeding and genetics program](#). An associate professor in the Horticulture & Crop Science Department, Dr. Francis' research has provided unique insight into the genetic mechanisms of host resistance and pathogen virulence and the biochemical regulation of carotenoid biosynthesis during tomato fruit development. His work has led to the introduction of high-quality, disease-resistant tomato varieties (10 since 1999) that have had a significant impact on tomato production and processing in Ohio and the Great Lakes region. Ohio tomato farming grew from a \$40 million industry in 1998 to one worth \$101 million in 2002, ranking the state as the country's third-largest producer of fresh and processing tomatoes.

Dr. Francis' program has introduced and improved germplasm with increased amounts of lycopene, a nutrient known to fight cancer; has pioneered bioinformatics and experimental approaches to molecular marker development that will change how genetic analysis is performed in plants; and was one of the first to successfully apply proteomics to the study of plant-microbe interactions. He has published 24 scientific papers in refereed journals, contributed one book chapter, presented 28 invited seminars at scientific meetings, and generated more than \$4 million in grant funding as principal investigator (PI) or co-PI.

Francis received \$1,000, a plaque and a \$3,000 supplement to the operating account of his research programs.



Roel Rabara won the 2006 OARDC graduate student poster competition with "Moisture sorption characteristics of seeds of five ornamental species."

Two Horticulture & Crop Science graduate students were named as winners in the 2006 OARDC graduate student poster competition held during the Center's conference. Judged by a panel of 28 OARDC scientists, the posters summarized the methods, results and conclusions of 41 entrants' research projects. Roel C. Rabara took home first place, and a \$500 award, in the Master's degree category with his poster, "Moisture sorption characteristics of seeds of five ornamental species". OSU seed biologist **Miller McDonald** serves as Rabara's advisor.



Anton Prajitna's poster, "Do vineyard cultural practices improve health benefits in wines?", won third place in the student competition.

Anton Prajitna earned third place honors in the same category for his presentation, "Do vineyard cultural practices improve health benefits in wines?" OARDC viticulturist **Imed Dami** serves as advisor to Prajitna. Graduate students **Shuangyi Bai**, **Audrey Darrigues**, and **Taniya Dhillon** also participated in the competition.

Focused on a theme titled "The Role of Agricultural and Renewable Resources in Energy and Bioproducts," the conference took place in the Shisler Conference Center and featured speakers from the

Ohio Governor's office, Michigan State University, the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, plus OARDC Director Steve Slack and Bobby Moser, dean of Ohio State's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

Watch a narrated slideshow of this story with additional photos here: [OARDC Honors HCS Faculty and Students Slideshow](#). Quicktime software required to view slideshow.

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