
International Organisation for Biological Control (IOBC)
Organisation Internationale de Lutte Biologique (OILB)



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50th Anniversary of IOBC Global - 31 March 1971 - 2021

IOBC Global has been serving the biological control community since 1971 by developing and application of various types of biological control worldwide. In doing so, it stimulated the use of sustainable pest control, particularly for subsistence farming in the poorest countries, in natural areas, but also in the most modern farming systems. This has resulted in replacement of chemical pesticides by natural enemies and microbial control agents, leading to reduction in environmental and human health problems, and stimulation of biodiversity. Below, we summarize the history of IOBC.

We hope to bring out a toast to our 50th anniversary next year during the General Assembly at the XXXVIth International Congress of Entomology (ICE2022) in Helsinki, Finland.

Martin Hill, President and Joop C. van Lenteren, Secretary General IOBC Global

From a regional commission to the worldwide operating Organisation of Biological Control

The early history of IOBC from the very beginning in 1948 to the establishment of Global IOBC in 1971 at Rome is a mix of good ideas, politics, intrigues, personal, national and regional ambitions, and excellent guidance by persons with an open mind. This early history is well documented and summarized by Dr. E.F. Boller in Part I of the book describing the History of the first 50 years of IOBC (Boller et al. 2006; free pdf copy on the IOBC website). The following paragraphs are taken from this chapter.

The first idea to create an international organisation on biological control emerged in 1948. At the 8th International Congress of Entomology in Stockholm 11 specialists of biological control met under the auspices of IUBS (International Union of Biological Sciences) and with the financial support of UNESCO. The fact that the idea for an international organisation developed in Europe can be explained as follows: In most of Europe plant protection had focussed on chemical pest control. Contrarily, entomologists of the British Commonwealth and in the United States had developed and applied biological control next to chemical control for almost a century. Important institutions specialised in biological control had been established in these countries. Despite the existence of several famous taxonomists in Europe the individual countries had inadequate resources and very few specialists to effectively implement biological control.



Participants of the Stockholm meeting of 1948

The intention of the entomologists meeting in Stockholm was described as follows: “*The proposed international organisation is viewed as an extension to other countries of the kind of work already being carried out by the United States of America and the British Commonwealth. (This organisation should) work in co-operation with all institutes and individuals actively carrying out biological control work*”. Especially the European participants of the meeting had great interest to establish a network covering the needs of continental western Europe, the Mediterranean region and the Middle East. At the end of the meeting in Stockholm, IUBS decided to support the establishment of a “Commission Internationale de Lutte Biologique (CILB).

After having solved a lot organisational, financial and scientific problems, the statutes were ratified, and the first plenary session took place in November 1956 in Antibes, France. Two CILB services were established at that meeting (an Identification service for entomophagous insects, and a Documentation service for Systematics and Biology and application). At the same time the first issue of the journal ENTOMOPHAGA (later changed into BioControl) appeared. One of the most effective actions of CILB was the formation of project-oriented Working Groups. These Working Groups merged the individual and fragmented national efforts into joint projects. Under the guidance of well-experienced specialists, groups of young and active scientists were given financial support by the founding organisations to develop international projects. These working groups still form the heart of the West European regional section of IOBC, with now 24 active groups (https://www.iobc-wprs.org/expert_groups/index.html).

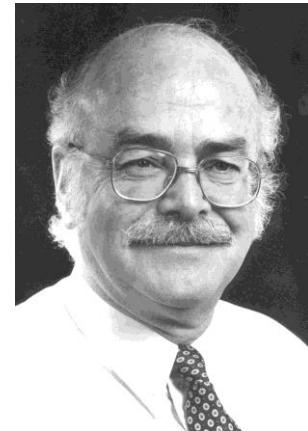
In 1965 the name of CILB was changed into OILB/IOBC (Organisation Internationale de Lutte Biologique/International Organisation of Biological Control) and a few years later, in 1969, the earlier confrontation between the two organisations claiming international

leadership in biological control, namely IOBC and IACBC. IACBC (International Advisory Committee for Biological Control) consisted mainly of experts from the British Commonwealth and its main role was to assist institutions and countries wishing information on the possibilities of world-wide biological control. IUBS considered the existence of two international bodies with almost identical objectives undesirable and explored the possibility of having one single organisation concerned with biological control which could satisfy the needs of the majority of biological control research workers and institutions. On the initiative of the Secretary General of IUBS a meeting was held between IOBC, IACBC and IUBS in Amsterdam in 1969 attended by 34 key persons in biological control from all over the world. At the end of this meeting, the participants agreed that IOBC would be the worldwide organisation representing biological control, that ENTOMOPHAGA would remain the journal of the organisation, and that regional sections would be formed. The agreements resulted in the establishment of IOBC Global in 1971 at the headquarters of FAO in Rome, Italy.

We were so fortunate to find an eyewitness to this meeting and here is what he experienced:

Eyewitness Report by Ernst Boller, present at the establishment of IOBC Global in 1971

Joop van Lenteren: Ernst, you have been an eyewitness when IOBC Global was established in 1971. How was it? **Ernst Boller:** Fifty years have a bit eroded my memory, but: Yes, I had been there in Rome when IOBC Global was established end March 1971 at the 5th General Assembly. A large crowd of people had gathered at FAO headquarters, composed of IOBC Council members, Convenors of Working Groups reporting on their activities, high level representatives of FAO, EPPO, IUBS, Commonwealth and US institutions etc. For me it was the first time that I had been invited to participate in such an IOBC event. I had come to Rome to report on my Working Group (Genetic control of *Rhagoletis cerasi*) and to attend the scientific symposium on "Implication of permanent insect production" held in conjunction with the General Assembly. Different meetings organised at various levels (old IOBC, new WPRS, new Global IOBC etc.) took place within a short period of time, coffee breaks and apéro buffets attracted attention and many young participants like me had a hard time to know exactly what was going on when and where. Students and junior scientists stumbled during the coffee breaks into celebrities they knew only from textbooks or by hearsay. In summary, it can be speculated that only a limited number of higher ranking participants were possibly aware of the historic importance of the event. The majority of the "ordinary" participants like myself was probably not. Only in retrospect, when I was preparing the manuscript for the History of IOBC in 2005, I understood the significance of the Roman event in the development of our organisation and could say: "I was an eyewitness". **Joop:** Your memory seems to be still okay. What else do you remember? **Ernst:** Well, there are often the most ridiculous and unimportant things that get stored in the brain. In the case of Rome 1971 there are two small episodes that I can remember. But I doubt that it would be appropriate to mention two ridiculous happenings in the context of this important historic situation. **Joop:** Well, I don't know, but as a small appendix to an eyewitness-report.....Speak up! **Ernst:** The first mishap occurred to me just before I was going to present my paper of "Behavioural aspects of mass-rearing of insects". When I handed my 20 neatly arranged slides to the person operating the slide-projector we let them drop. Therefore, I started my presentation by hunting and collecting my slides scattered all over the place. Needless to say that afterwards every second projected slide was a wrong one and my embarrassing performance not a winner. The



second episode I recall concerned the next speaker, namely Ken Hagen from Berkely (yes, the man who became Global IOBC President in 1980). Ken had arrived the night before in Rome with his luggage (including all his slides) lost in transit. To save his presentation he handpainted in his hotel room with a felt-tip-pen a slide showing some important information. I do not remember exactly what Ken was talking about in his presentation nor the content of his crude slide but I remember exactly the colour of the hand-painted histogram largely projected on the wall: it was blue! **Joop:** Thank you, Ernst, for sharing with us this interesting information!

IOBC Global 1971 - 2021

For a history of IOBC Global, I refer to Part II in the History of the first 50 years of IOBC (Boller et al. 2006; free pdf copy on the IOBC website). The reason that IOBC originally developed in Europe and was limited to that area for its first 25 years of existence, was due mainly to the lack of a coordinating organisation for biological control in this area. Other areas, like northern America and the British Commonwealth (including Australia and New Zealand), had strong organisations and a long standing history in the field of biological control. Still it was felt necessary by many biological control researchers to form a truly worldwide organisation that would overview and coordinate the biological control activities. IOBC Global, established in 1971, was first concerned with the establishment of Regional Sections, a process that resulted in six sections. Some of these have been active since 1971, other started more recently. Several Regional Sections have formed regional working groups, most regions produce a newsletter and regularly hold a General Assembly.



**IOBC Global General Assembly 1980 Kyoto.
Executive Committee, left to right DeBach, Bennett, Hagen, Mathys, Huffaker, Rice**

IOBC Global stimulated the formation of working groups on issues that are of worldwide importance. The first, and still active, working group of IOBC Global “Ostrinia and other maize pests” started in 1979, followed by another still active working group “Arthropod Mass Rearing and Quality Control” in 1980. Global now has 11 working groups mainly on biological control of arthropods and weeds. Biological control of diseases is underrepresented in Global working groups, but well covered in groups of several Regional Sections. Most working groups produce a newsletter, proceedings and now have a website.

IOBC Global developed international relationships with other organisations involved in crop protection and it started to issue newsletters on a regular basis to inform its members and relations. Global currently has official links with the International Organization of Biological Sciences IUBS), several institutes of the United Nations, like the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO UN) with which it developed a code of conduct for the safe use of biological control agents, with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD UN) on the issue of Access and Benefit Sharing, and the World Health Organization (WHO UN), and institutes of the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR). With several of the aforementioned institutions, IOBC Global also worked on quality control guidelines for mass produced arthropods, environmental risk assessment of exotic biocontrol agents.

IOBC has since long its own journal, which started in 1956 under the name Entomophaga and continued as BioControl in 1998. The journal is highly respected and ranks among the top 10 journals in the category of entomology.

In summary, the 50 years old IOBC Global is a healthy organisation, representing thousands of biocontrol researchers worldwide, with active Regional Sections and working groups, in good financial shape and with an excellent scientific journal.

Joop C. van Lenteren in cooperation with Ernst F. Boller, 30 March 2021