

RATION PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Risk AssessmentT InnOvation for low-risk pesticides

Potential low-risk pesticides (LRPs) of natural origin are gaining in popularity, particularly in response to the European Green Deal. However, the data requirements for the authorisation process in the European Union (EU) are largely similar to those for synthetic pesticides, which can hinder the market entry of potential LRPs.

The EU-funded RATION project (Grant Agreement n° 101084163) aims to make a significant contribution to improving risk assessment procedures for potential naturally occurring LRPs.

Duration: From 01.11.2022 to 31.10.2026
Budget: 7€ millions 100% funded by the European Commission

Consortium: 21 beneficiaries and 1 associated partner from 10 Member States and two non-EU countries

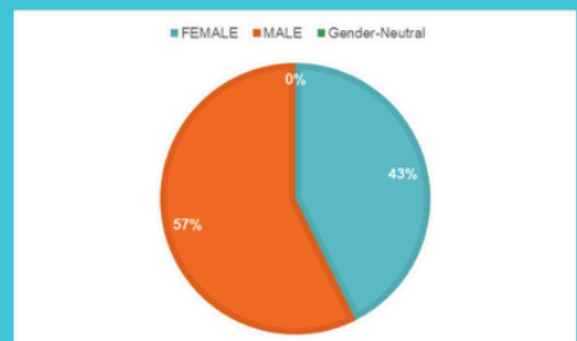
GENDER EQUALITY IN RATION

Equality between women and men and non-discrimination are common values on which the EU is founded and are firmly embedded in the Treaties of the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and secondary legislation.

All partners in RATION are committed to integrate gender aspects into their research and development schemes, including equal opportunities for women and men and consider the gender dimension contributing to excellence in research.

In RATION a strategy is implemented throughout the duration of the project to ensure gender equality and balance. Monitoring and assessment of the procedures and practices employed in the project is conducted to identify gender bias and corrective measures are shaped and implemented.

Employment in all positions in RATION is represented by 40% women scientists, while in 9/22 partner institutions, the leading scientists are females. Furthermore, a well-balanced distribution of genders is observed for the management and implementation of RATION, with a 50% percentage of women being present in the General Assembly, which is the highest decision body in RATION. The Steering Committee, composed by the coordinator and the WP leaders, has a slightly imbalanced 37% of women representation but in this case the ratio was formed based on the expertise and the willingness of the participating institutions to lead a WP. The Project Management Board comprises a majority of women, with 3/4 of its members being female.



Composition of researchers in RATION consortium

FOCUS ON RATION'S WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Today, women represent only a third of the world's scientific community and, compared with men, they receive less funding and are under-represented in publications.

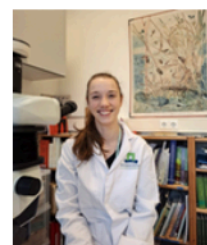
In RATION a three-prong strategy is implemented throughout the duration of the project to ensure gender equality and balance.

RATION has decided to take advantage of this newsletter to honour female researchers with their testimonials, which are summarised below.

More on the interviews can be found here: <https://www.ration-lrp.eu/gender-equality-plan/>

Judith Epping is conducting her PhD research in the RATION project focusing on aquatic ecotoxicology of low-risk pesticides and is mainly involved in work packages 2 and 3.

She participates in 'Meet a female scientist interview series' that is part of the Gender Equality Plan followed by RATION.



Can you briefly introduce yourself?

My name is Judith Epping and I am a PhD Candidate in the Aquatic Ecology and Water Quality Management Group at Wageningen University & Research in The Netherlands. In my PhD I am studying the impact of different biopesticides on aquatic organisms. My research specialization currently is in aquatic ecotoxicology but I prefer to be considered a "generalist".

What are the main skills to build your career in science and engage with others in the scientific community?

Scientific research is a path that equally requires resilience and curiosity in my opinion. It can be very challenging at times, but when you finally figure out a problem you have been stuck at for a while it is also incredibly rewarding. Not giving up, and holding on to this drive to want to know more are essentials for me. At the same time, you have to have a set of what is often called "soft skills". One key skill is knowing when to ask for help, it can save you so much time and energy and you might expand your scientific network along the way.

What advice would you give to your female colleagues and the next generation of women in science?

Be more confident! Especially for a PhD, in the end it is your project with your name on top, you should be confident enough to shape it so that you get the most out of it!

Thank you for reading our newsletter.

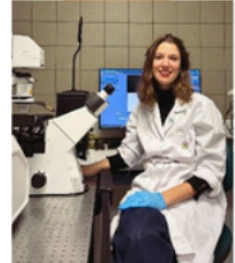
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FOCUS ON RATION'S WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Dr. Venetia Kidou is Post-Doctoral Research Associate at ELGO-DIMITRA, with prior work and expertise in insect molecular biology. In the framework of RATION, she is involved in WP4 (Risk assessment for dsRNA pesticides), especially T4.1 (Hazard identification for ds-RNA pesticides) and T4.3 (Environmental exposure and fate of dsRNA).

She participates in 'Meet a female scientist interview series' that is part of the Gender Equality Plan followed by RATION



Can you briefly introduce yourself?

My name is Venetia Kidou and I am a Post-Doctoral Researcher in Plant and Environmental Biology Laboratory, splitting my time between the Department of Biotechnology and Biochemistry in University of Thessaly and the Institute of Industrial and Forage Crops in Hellenic Agricultural Organization, in Larissa, Greece. My research expertise lays at a molecular entomology level.

What drew you to pursue a career in science, specifically in your field of research?

Science provides an opportunity to combine several scientific fields and develop an integrated scientific approach. Furthermore, the ultimate freedom you often experience in this job is quite challenging, looking through the microscope lenses for example, compared to other more ordinary jobs.

What advice would you give to your female colleagues and the next generation of women in science?

We shouldn't be afraid demanding equal opportunities, whether this is in education, funding, leadership, or recognition. Collaboration, rather than competition, through the development of a vocal communication between us, can smooth out barriers that female scientists face. It's not just about succeeding individually, but about creating pathways for all women to thrive!

Thank you for reading our newsletter.

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NEWS FROM RATION

Presentation of RATION in the 19th International Symposium on Microbial Ecology (ISME19) in Cape Town, South Africa

The participation of our colleague Popy Papadopoulou at ISME19 was the opportunity to talk about RATION. The work presented addresses two aspects that are targetted in RATION, towards the development of a new RA scheme for dsRNAs as low-risk biopesticides: (a) the mode-of-action of small RNAs in the plant, focusing on epigenetic effects on the plant genome, and (b) the movement of sRNAs in the root-to-shoot access.



Participation at the Conference Novel Pesticides 'Towards Sustainability in the Regulatory Framework of the EU'

Dr. Dimitrios Karpouzas and Dr. Khalid Amari Baba were invited to present their work in the conference that was held in Düsseldorf Germany in 19th and 20th of September 2024. Both Professors had the opportunity to talk about RATION progress and activities and ds-RNA pesticides and the work performed by RATION in this area.



RATION Researchers from INIA-CSIC group presenting their work in September 2024 at the Spanish Society of phytopathology

Dr Jose Luis Alonso Prados and Dr Belén Guijarro presented the work done in the area of microbial pesticides risk assessment in the project RATION and talked and presented a poster about low risk microbial active substances in the framework of the EU legislation, data requirements, novel microbial solutions like bacterio phages, protists and consortia.



Presentation of the main findings and results of RATION at ABIM 2024 Conference in Basel

The researchers of RATION along with the member of the advisory board Dr S. Arpaia, an expert in the risk assessment of dsRNA, presented their work and had the chance to discuss with the audience the future work on the area of risk assessment of low risk pesticides. The RATION workshop was organized with the valuable help of IBMA and it was attended by over 100 people.



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