Israel

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- In 2008, ~40 research articles employing Arabidopsis were published from groups in Israel. These included such diverse subjects, as biophysics and protein crystallography, bioinformatics, metabolic engineering and molecular development. The major centers of Arabidopsis research are in The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, the Weizmann Institute of Science, and the Ben Gurion University of the Negev.
- Funding - "Rumors of the death of Arabidopsis at BARD are premature": Last year we reported that BARD (The United States - Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund) was canceling their "Model System and Functional Biology in the Service of Agriculture" panel, the panel that funded the majority of Arabidopsis research (~$1,000,000 in Arabidopsis research annually). While this year's awards have yet to be announced, according to a senior BARD official: "Rumors of the death of Arabidopsis at BARD are premature." If so, this is a tentative positive sign that funding of Arabidopsis research is now intimately intertwined with agricultural research and that no specific programs are needed to ensure its continuation.
- New hirings – returning postdocs: Three young Arabidopsis researchers returned to Israel from postdoctoral training in the US – Sigal Savaldi-Goldstein from the Chory lab to the Faculty of Biology at the Technion, Leor Eshed-Williams from the Fletcher lab to the Hebrew University Faculty of Agriculture, and Aaron Fait returned from the Max Planck Institute, Golm to take a position at Ben-Gurion University's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research.
- New collaborations between industry and academia: The laboratory of Simon Barak at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research of Ben-Gurion University established a research collaboration with Bayer BioScience N.V., a subsidiary of Bayer CropScience, to identify genes that allow plants to tolerate the harsh environmental stresses characteristic of arid regions. For more information, see the 'Broader Impacts' section of this report.
- Translational research – From Arabidopsis to Tomato: Tomato is a traditional Israeli crop and model plant. In recent years, several groups that traditionally worked with tomatoes have incorporated the advantages of Arabidopsis for functional analyses studies, conversely; several groups working on Arabidopsis have expanded their interest into tomato as a traditional crop plant system. For example, tissue-specific promoters discovered in Arabidopsis were tested and found functional in tomato, and the transactivation system and the fluorescence complementation in vivo protein interaction system, both developed in Arabidopsis, have been introduced into tomato. In these aspects, research in Arabidopsis has fulfilled its promise as a model system that can greatly promote understanding of other plant species.