

Spotlight on Bram Pareyt

AACC International members each have their own story, and we want to highlight all of their amazing accomplishments. "Spotlights" is a series of individual and institutional member interviews capturing the unique stories of our many volunteers and their journeys with AACCI.



Bram Pareyt
Puratos Group
AACCI Protein Division Chair

Q: What is your current position and what type of work do you do?

A: I am research manager proteins at the Group Research & Services (GRS) lab in the Puratos Group headquarters in Belgium. Puratos is a global, family-owned leading manufacturer of ingredients for bakery, patisserie, and chocolate. Within the corporate lab, where my colleagues all have their expertise (e.g., ingredients, flavor, oils and fats, cocoa, fermentation, enzymes, sensory, regulatory, etc.), I am the lead

or involved in projects where the focus is protein functionality. As such, I am involved in fundamental research projects, both in house and in collaboration with suppliers and universities or knowledge centers, and in projects supporting more directly our different business units. Because of my background in cereal science, I am also involved in flour competence.

Q: When and how did you first decide you wanted to work in cereal grain science?

A: I first realized I had a deep interest in cereal grain science when I was a student at KU Leuven following the Cereal Technology course of Dr. Jan Delcour. The passionate way he presented the course topics and, at the same time, challenged his students made me go further in that direction with a master's thesis program in his lab. After that, I started a Ph.D. program under Dr. Delcour's supervision, which convinced me this was my direction to follow professionally. The broad range of topics, challenges, unraveled mechanisms, and unanswered questions still triggers my interest in this area. I also believe it is a unique field, producing not only new food developments, but also offering numerous opportunities for doing this using unique technologies and bringing health, nutrition, and sustainability to consumers.

Q: When did you first join AACCI and why?

A: I was introduced to AACCI by my mentor Dr. Delcour and joined AACCI in 2009 when I first attended the annual meeting in Baltimore. Since becoming a member, I have attended most of the annual meetings. I have also been involved in different initiatives. I was a member of the Annual Meeting Technical Program Team for two consecutive years (as the chemistry and interactions scientific initiative chair for the AACCI Centennial Meeting) and for the last three years as a member of the Protein Division board. On the professional side, being an AACCI member has not only allowed me to make new connections and extend my network in cereal grain science, but also beyond the field. In addition, I have made a lot of new friends with completely different backgrounds.

Q: Why did you decide to volunteer with AACCI? How did you get involved with the Protein Division?

A: Kristof Brijs, one of my mentors, invited me to join the Annual Meeting Program Team as vice chair of chemistry

and interactions. In parallel, I also organized several symposia at AACCI Annual Meetings. This, in combination with the introduction to fellow researchers through networking, resulted in Clyde Don asking me to join the board of the Protein Division, which included Monjur Hossen and Katharina Scherf as other officers. Currently, the Protein Division board consists of Katharina Scherf (past chair), Jayne Bock (vice chair), Alessandra Marti (secretary-treasurer), Maneka Malalgoda (student representative), and myself (chair). We have succeeded over the last year in increasing the Protein Division membership to slightly more than 100 members, and I really hope the division remains that successful.

Q: What is your perspective on the evolving science concerning plant protein processing? How is it affecting cereal science and the cereal grains industry?

A: I have noticed an overall evolution toward "high protein" and "plant-based protein." These are interesting observations, but they challenge us, the food industry, to find ways to feed a growing population (i.e., provide people with enough protein) and to do so in a sustainable way.

Also, many new plant-based protein sources are processed so that they meet specific nutritional demands. However, their nutritional value and technological functionalities are very often different from those of proteins derived from animal sources. In the future, blends of unique proteins from both sources will likely provide innovative functionalities.

Further, concerning plant proteins, I think that we have some interesting challenges to tackle related to their technological functionalities, as these are key for producing high-quality foods that meet consumer demands. The cereal grains industry should make its related needs more clear so that more attention is given to meeting these technological challenges.

Q: What are the hot topics in protein? How are you addressing them?

A: There are different hot topics in protein, both on the positive side and on the negative side. A major hot topic is nutrition, which, as long as it is based on common sense and driven by scientific data, is excellent. At Puratos, our vision is built around taste and nutrition and a strong commitment to help prepare the world for the next generation. We address this by developing products and solutions that optimize the nutritional profiles of baked goods, bringing more grains and fruits into the diet, creating transparency in the supply chain, mobilizing new sources of raw materials, and reducing food waste.

Q: What's next for you?

A: First of all, I am grateful that Filip Arnaut, director of the GRS lab at Puratos, recognizes the importance of being active in networks and associations such as AACCI and, further, allows me to do so. After the 2017 Annual meeting, I will be past-chair of the Protein Division for a year. I am also a member of the Milling & Baking Division and am serving on the Protein & Enzyme Methods Technical Committee and the CFW Global Advisory Panel.

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