

## Welcome letter: NAPB President – Ksenija Gasic



The National Association of Plant Breeders is a young, vibrant, enthusiastic, and fully volunteer based society with a mission “**to strengthen plant breeding to promote food security, quality of life and a sustainable future**”. A decade has passed since the establishment of the NAPB, and our first annual meeting hosted by Texas A&M University in 2011. Within this decade, we have experienced challenges not only related to nurturing and growing a new society, or strengthening our mission and promoting the importance and success of plant breeding; but also a global pandemic and the rapid need to adjust to a virtual world. NAPB has done great thanks to all of you!

We have successfully completed our second annual virtual meeting, organized by Cornell University with close to 300 attendees registered. Armed with experience from the previous year and timely decision to meet virtually, Cornell University and Seed World did an excellent job with meeting organization, virtual field tours, and plenty of opportunities for attendees to engage. Almost half of the attendees were graduate students and early career scientists who did an amazing job in organizing poster sessions and presenting cutting-edge science. **The future of plant breeding in the U.S is bright and in good hands.**

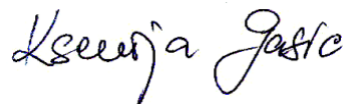
The review of 2019-2023 NAPB Strategic Plan, presented by the past-president Dr. Todd Campbell, confirmed we are progressing towards meeting the goals identified in the six objectives. The **membership** numbers are increasing, and diverse educational and professional development opportunities that are provided throughout the year increase both the value and prestige of NAPB membership. Our dedication to expanding existing **collaborations** with organizations and associations such as PBCC, ASTA, the Tri-Societies, and Seed World; while building on newly formed ones with APBA and ASHS, continue to be extremely important as NAPB moves forward. These strong collaborations are vital to promoting the profession, educating the general public and policy makers on the importance of plant breeding, while also advocating for strong, long-term support for plant breeding activities for the benefit of mankind. The NAPB’s youngest committee, Commercial Plant Breeders has made excellent progress with expanding their membership, creating engaging activities and internship opportunities to provide experiential learning opportunities for NAPB members. If you want to make a difference the time to do it is now! Opportunities such as congressional visits provide an empowering experience to NAPB student members to advocate on behalf of the society and plant breeding.

The more I think of the great accomplishment and strides our young society has made, the more I am excited for what lies ahead. I enter my term as a President with dedication to continue to build on a foundation built under the leadership of past president David Bubeck. Some of the notable accomplishments I hope to continue are partnerships with ASTA and other

agencies to positively influence congressional legislation on the use of genetic modifications in plant breeding, as well as increase awareness of the importance of genetic resources for plant breeding through ongoing alliances with the PBCC to support and advise NGRAC. The 2021 Borlaug Scholar Fellowship class features a record number of scholars (24) from both graduate (18) and undergraduate (6) students; whose amazing stories are featured in short video clips that were presented at the annual meeting and are available on the NAPB and Cornell University websites.

In the upcoming year, one of my main goals is to facilitate the development and launch of a new NAPB website that is as engaging, energetic and captivating as NAPB members and plant breeding. With your support, the Executive Committee and I will work diligently on 1) increasing the membership body by retaining and recruiting new members and providing and advertising the unique opportunities NAPB membership provides. 2) Ensuring and promoting diversity and inclusion through NAPB activities. 3) Continue advancing awareness of the importance of plant breeding for sustainability and success of our great country and the betterment of mankind. With your support there is no limit to what we can achieve.

It is a privilege to be in a position to lead this great society and I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve as your president for the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keeraj Gajic". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'G'.