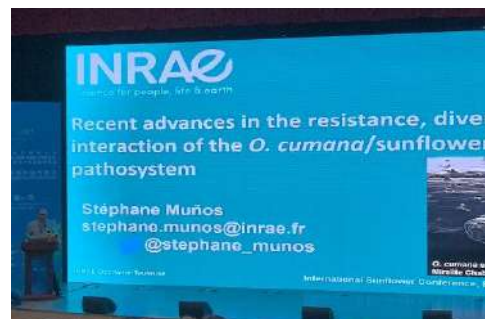


## Reflection on Attending the 21<sup>st</sup> International Sunflower Conference

Participating in the 21<sup>st</sup> International Sunflower Conference was an enriching and inspiring experience. This prestigious event brought together leading experts and researchers from around the world to discuss the latest advancements in sunflower research, covering topics ranging from genetic breeding to disease resistance and environmental adaptation. As a graduate student, I was thrilled to be part of such a vibrant academic community and to have the opportunity to learn from so many insightful presentations.

Throughout the conference, I attended numerous thought-provoking talks that broadened my understanding of sunflower research. For example, the presentations that particularly stood out to me was on the topic of “Sunflower in the global food system: situation and perspectives” by Etienne Pilorgé; “Pervasive structural variation in *Helianthus*: implications for sunflower breeding” by Loren Rieseberg. “The genomics of linkage drag in inbred lines of sunflower” by Huang Kaichi, and “Recent advances in the resistance, diversity, and interaction of the *O. cumana*/sunflower pathosystem” by Stéphane Muñoz and so on. The speakers’ innovative approach to evolutionary, genomic mapping, identifying resistance genes in sunflowers was eye-opening and gave me new ideas on how I might integrate similar methodologies into my own research. I also gave two presentations at the conference and the depth and breadth of knowledge shared during the conference were truly inspiring, and I left each session with a wealth of new information and ideas to explore.



One of the most rewarding moments for me during the conference was receiving the Conference student grant ISC2024. This recognition was not only a validation of the hard work I have put into my research but also a significant motivator for my future endeavors. Preparing for the conference,

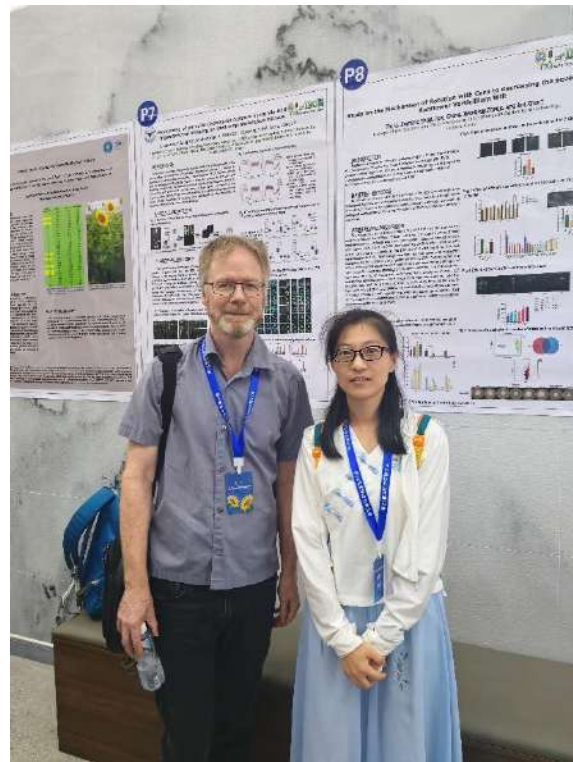
from writing my two abstracts to delivering my presentation, was a challenging yet immensely fulfilling process. The award has reinforced my commitment to continuing my research and has given me greater confidence in my ability to contribute to the field of sunflower studies. Most importantly, it also motivates me to learn English listening and speaking ability well.

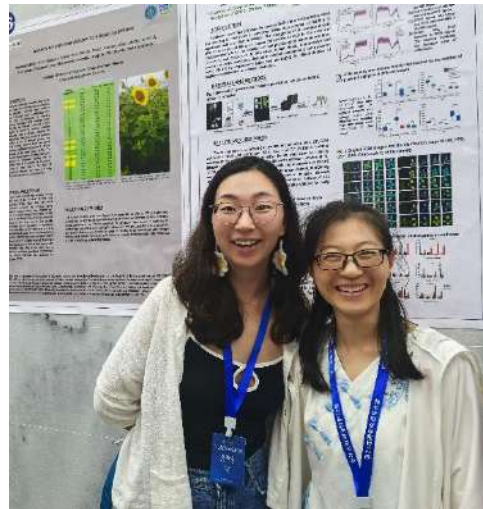
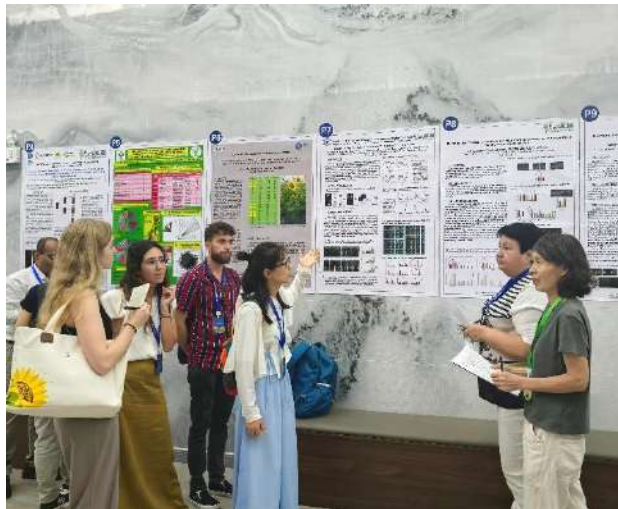
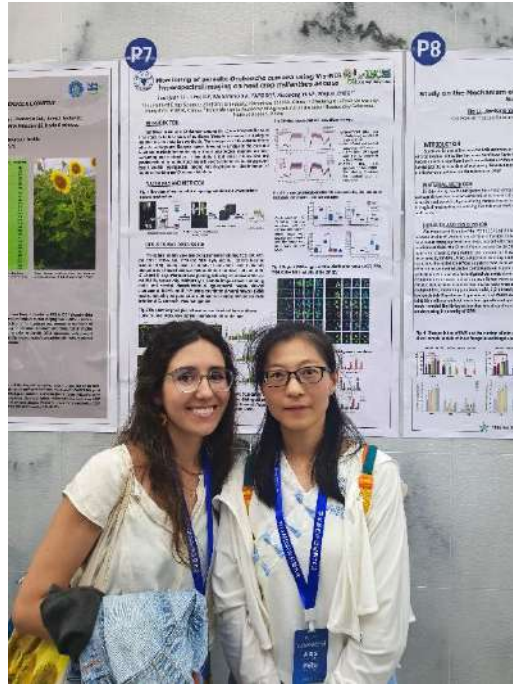
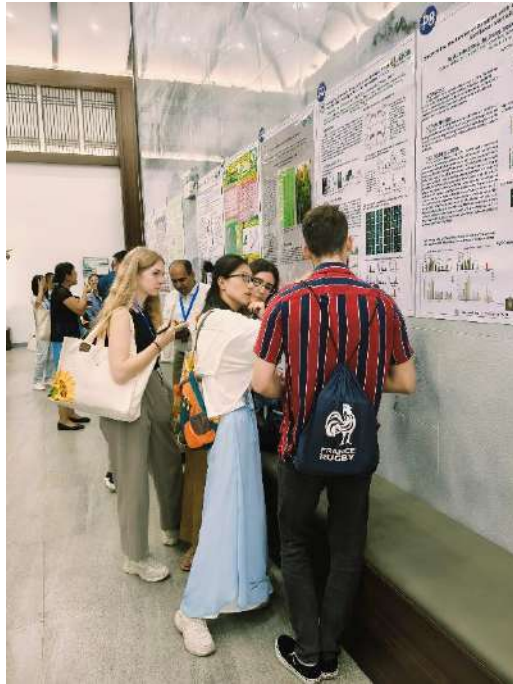




Looking ahead, I plan to build on the knowledge and insights gained from this conference. I am particularly interested in further exploring the high-throughput genomic methods, bioinformatics, ecological experiments, and evolutionary theory to study the origin and evolution of *Helianthus*, domesticated plants, and weeds, inspired by the presentations I attended. The goal is to ... hopefully, to come up with very innovative solutions to solve great threat to agriculture. It's been very challenging. But I think, you know, this is an area that we have to do. So, hope we have more opportunities to discuss these aspects in the future. Additionally, I hope to collaborate with other researchers I met at the conference, as I believe that combining our efforts could lead to significant advancements in sunflower research.

I submitted three posters, 1. Monitoring of parasite *Orobancha cumana* using Vis-NIR hyperspectral imaging on host crop *Helianthus annuus*; 2. Evolution of PEBP and bZIP gene families in *Helianthus annuus* and their signal functions to flowering; 3. Resistance potential of *HaCERK1* gene in response to *Orobancha cumana* infection in sunflower. In poster sessions, I had tried my best introduce my works to the researchers who interested in. A stimulating, pleasant, relax communication atmosphere inspired me. And I made some new friends. What a wonderful time!





During the Field Trip Day at the, Sunflower International Conference, I had the opportunity to observe sunflower varieties from other parts of the world in the field, with larger seeds and better taste, showcasing the diversity and potential of sunflower cultivation on a global scale. We talked, took photos and make friends. Maybe the last time together, seems precious.







In conclusion, the 21st International Sunflower Conference was a pivotal experience in my academic journey. It provided me with invaluable knowledge, inspiration, and recognition, all of which will guide my future research. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of this event and look forward to applying what I have learned to my work.

This was a grand and internationally welcoming event, inviting scientists from around the world to China. Although Inner Mongolia is just a fertile land in the north of China, the temperate continental monsoon climate has nurtured hardworking and humble people. It is a vast and beautiful land known for its expansive grasslands, rich cultural heritage, unique ethnic diversity and in the cultivation of raising of livestock such as sheep and cattle. As the poem by Tang dynasty "The lone smoke rises straight in the vast desert, while the long river reflects the setting sun, round and full." This imagery beautifully captures the vast and

majestic landscapes of the desert regions in the Northwest of China. Welcome friends from all over the world to China, and welcome to explore more beautiful rivers and mountains of this great land.

Many thanks to the organization of international Sunflower Conference Committee and all volunteers contribute to this Conference.