

Meet Our — Team

International
Course on
Parasitic
Plants:
Problems and
Solutions



Antonio Cala Peralta



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Dr. Antonio Cala Peralta is an Assistant Professor in the Organic Chemistry Department at the University of Cádiz. He earned his Ph.D. in Science with honors in 2017, receiving awards from both the University of Cádiz and the Spanish Royal Society of Chemistry. His research focuses on the synthesis of natural products and their application in herbicide development. He completed a two-year postdoctoral stay in France (2018–2020), investigating bioactive compounds from apple tree leaves for prostate cancer treatment.

He collaborates with the University of Naples Federico II and IAS-CSIC on the search for new bioactive herbicides. He has led research projects, published over 20 papers, supervised students, and actively participates in international conferences and outreach events.

Jesús García Zorrilla



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Dr. Jesús García Zorrilla is a Chemist with two Master's degrees and a Ph.D. in Agro-Food Resources from the University of Cádiz. His research specializes in Natural Product Chemistry, focusing on the isolation and synthesis of bioactive compounds for agrochemical and pharmaceutical applications. His doctoral work on strigolactone analogues contributes to parasitic weed control.

He has collaborated internationally with institutions such as CSIC, the U.S. Forest Service, and the University of Sousse. With 29 articles, a book chapter, and a patent, he has made significant contributions to the field. In 2024, he received the European Phytochemical Society Prize for Best Young Researcher in Natural Products.

Francisco Javier Rodríguez Mejías

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Dr. Francisco J. Rodríguez Mejías holds a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the University of Cádiz, where he developed organic encapsulation agents for pharmacological and agrochemical applications. He completed a research stay at Jacobs University Bremen and earned cum laude honors with a European doctor distinction. He has published 19 JCR Q1/Q2 articles, 2 patents, and a book chapter. His work has received multiple awards, including Best Doctoral Thesis by the Spanish Royal Society of Chemistry.

As a postdoctoral researcher, he has contributed to projects in Cádiz and Innsbruck, supervised students, and managed research grants exceeding €1M. He also holds leadership roles in scientific committees.

Mónica Fernández-Aparicio Ruiz

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Dr. Mónica Fernández-Aparicio Ruiz has PhD in Agronomy (Córdoba University) and more than twenty years of experience in the study of parasitic weeds (Orobanchespp., Phelipanchespp., Striga spp., and Cuscuta spp.) addressing the topics of a) host-parasitic plant chemical interaction; b) identification and characterization of crop resistance against parasitic weed infection; c) allelopathy (identification and characterization of plant and microbial toxins with herbicidal effect); d) studies of cropping systems that reduce the infection (intercropping, cover crops), in order to allow the integration of diversified strategies for parasitic weed management.

She has published a total of 94 publications in scientific journals, with 3340 cites of her work.