



# FAOPMA-Pest Summit 2020

A review of the most successful virtual conference ever held by FAOPMA

**Stephen L. Doggett**

**N**ever in our lifetime has humanity faced a greater challenge. By mid-November 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in more than 55 million cases and, sadly, some 1.3 million deaths. By the by the end of the year the number of deaths had surpassed 1.8 million.

Unfortunately, the economic impacts of the pandemic have been devastating. It was

estimated that a single case of COVID-19 costs an economy \$USD46,000. The World Economic Forum has now forecasted that the global economic costs could be as high as \$USD15.8 trillion! Already we have seen unemployment skyrocket to levels not seen since the Great Depression with poverty rapidly on the rise.

Many business sectors are facing difficult times ahead and numerous establishments have already





# FAOPMA PEST SUMMIT 2020 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 18 -19, 2020

FAOPMA-Pest Summit would like to acknowledge the following companies for their kind support for the 2020 Virtual Conference:



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gone bankrupt under the financial pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pest management industry has not been immune to these impacts and companies are going to find survival to the future very challenging.

Due to lockdown measures and human safety, and that most countries halted international travel, the annual FAOPMA-Pest Summit meeting had to be cancelled. This was planned to be held in September 2020 in Manila, Philippines.

The Federation of Asian and Oceania Pest Managers Associations ('FAOPMA'), has a strong commitment for supporting the industry during these difficult times. Thus it was decided that a Virtual Meeting would be held based around the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges this contagion has caused the industry. *Arguably, this event was the most important conference ever held to date in the global history of pest management.*

The theme of the meeting was '**Survive COVID-19; Protecting Your Future**', with the aim of safeguarding the pest management industry through an uncertain world. The event was held over 18-19/November/2020.

Assembled were many of the greatest speakers in pest management today. This included owners of companies who not only survived the Global/Asian Financial Crisis but came through bigger and stronger. Presentations included talks on the future of COVID-19, the economic impacts of the pandemic, the impacts of the pandemic on urban pests, remote management options during the pandemic, remote learning, remote monitoring, marketing in times of COVID-19, business survival, overcoming mental health aspects, customer retention, and much more.

A special session was held to examine the impacts of the pandemic upon the pest management industry across the Asian, Pacific, and Indian regions, with talks given by the Presidents (or their representative) of the various industry associations.

In order for the meeting to be inclusive, the Organizing Committee (OC) decided to offer the registration at a much reduced cost, only USD\$50, and talks were translated into multiple languages including Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, and Thai. Most importantly, the meeting was designed to be all-encompassing



Opening FAOPMA-Pest Summit 2020 was Chairperson, Ms Josefina Dueñas.



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and made open to anyone who wished to attend the meeting. The OC wanted to support the entire pest management industry, even those not yet under the FAOPMA umbrella. The committee have also made all talks available for a year after the event, as we know that everyone is very busy these days and it is difficult to sit through an entire day's worth of talks.

In total, there were some 1,146 delegates from 27 nations at the meeting. This was a phenomenal success in light of the meeting being the first virtual conference ever held by FAOPMA and the short lead-in time from announcement to the running of the event.

Exhibition booths were available to view the latest and greatest products from a variety of companies. All up there were some 17 exhibitors at the meeting. These booths were considered great value by the company. Each

booth contained videos of various products and information sheets that could be downloaded for later review. It was also possible to speak directly with a company representative. Many booths were interactive and included games and a photo booth.

Beyond the talks and exhibitions, break out rooms were available to allow for discussion between small groups.

All registrants received an e-copy of the souvenir conference program. This program was some 155 pages in length and included welcome messages from all the Presidents of the FAOPMA member countries, details of the major sponsors, the history of FAOPMA, the FAOPMA Executive and Organizing Committee, plus abstracts and biographies of all the speakers. The Organizing Committee decided that this book was to be made free to everyone, including those that did








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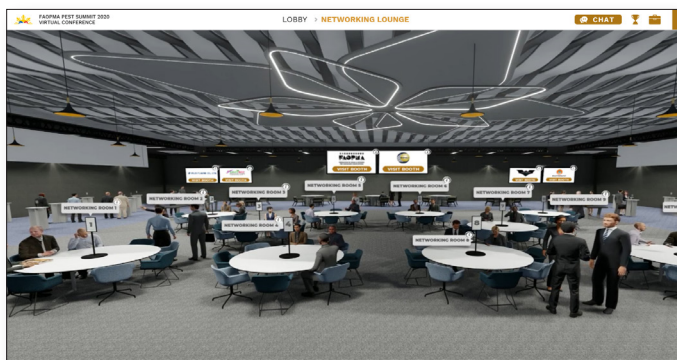
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not attend, and thus can be downloaded from  
<https://faopma.com/Conference/Summit-2020>.

There were some 38 presentations, with the event professionally hosted by **Don Puno**, who is a professional TV voice over actor in the Philippines. **Josefina Dueñas** (Chair of the event) opened the meeting on Day 1 and reviewed how the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly changed the world we live in. This was followed by the President of FAOPMA, **Vasili Tsoutouris**, whom provided the welcoming remarks. Vasili highlighted how the conference aimed to give all those in the pest management industry a helping hand during the

difficult times created by the pandemic, and he discussed some of the challenges that lay ahead.

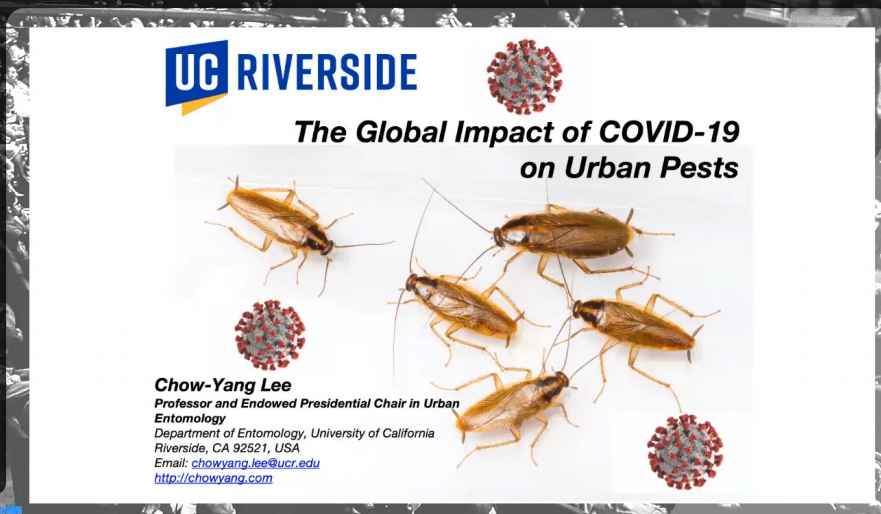
During this disease outbreak it is important to be able to recognise the clinical signs of COVID-19, how it is transmitted, how to prevent being infected, and most importantly, when the pandemic will be defeated. Thus the first full presentation of the meeting was on the future of COVID-19 from a clinical perspective, presented by **Prof. Dominic Dwyer** from Australia. The main points included that transmission is mainly by inhaled droplets or via contamination of surfaces. The main hope for controlling the pandemic in the long-term is via vaccination. However, there are still many questions unresolved, such as how long the vaccine will last. Only time will answer this question and in the meantime, people should continue to practice physical distancing, good hand hygiene, and wear face masks to protect themselves and others. You can read a more comprehensive overview of Dominic’s presentation elsewhere in this Magazine (see Pages 24-25).



The Networking Lounge.

**Pascal Cai**, Director of International Affairs with the Chinese Pest Control Association is





### THE GLOBAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON URBAN PESTS

PROF. CHOW-YANG LEE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE  
USA

Prof. Chow-Yang Lee from the University of California provided the keynote presentation.

business. He reviewed the challenges (cancelled jobs, delayed payments, curfews, travel, PPE availability) as well as the opportunities (increase in disinfection services). Expect an article on this talk in an upcoming issue of the *FAOPMA Magazine*.

**Vasili Tsoutouras**, President FAOPMA, Australia, discussed remote management operations during the pandemic. He reviewed many of the networking platforms available, along with their advantages and disadvantages. One important aspect that Vasili focused on was how to manage and lead a team in a world where we are working remotely; this is an enormous challenge at present.

A presentation of remote learning during COVID-19 was given by **Edwin Lim** of Syngenta, Singapore. He highlighted how important remote learning is as around 50% of his company is presently working from home.

A challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic has been to have your company noticed when the media is dominated by discussions on the disease. Thus **Viren Merchant**, Director, PCAMB, India, provided a presentation on marketing in the time

of COVID-19. With a decline in non-discretionary spending, it has become harder to sell many products. Viren noted that most of his business comes from referrals and existing customers, and thus most of your marketing budget should be directed to your loyal customer base. Marketing during the pandemic is about focusing on the existing customer and brand building, and that it is important to resonate with the customer.

Without a question, one of the most important talks of the meeting was given by **Dr Lourdes Fabia**, Founder of EvolveLink Consultancy Services, Philippines. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented pressure on our mental health, and Lourdes presented on being mentally healthy now and beyond the pandemic. She noted that it is important to train the mind to be calm, and to take time to pause and unplug from the world to make the mind more restful. Physical health is critical for mental health, and thus exercise, eating healthy, adequate sleep are all necessary for a restful mind. Most importantly, we need to cultivate meaningful relationships as loneliness is more dangerous to our health than smoking. Also see the extended article on Lourdes' presentation in this issue (see Pages 26-

27).

One of the most fascinating presentations was by **Fu Youcai**, Chairman, Wuhan Lifetai Technology, China. Fu Youcai is from Wuhan, the site where the virus that caused COVID-19 was first discovered. His company was tasked with the mammoth job of disinfection. Fu reviewed the progress of the disease, how it impacted the region, and in what way the pest management industry was called upon to defend the health of the community. Again, a more detailed manuscript of his presentation appears in the current issue of the FAOPMA Magazine (see Pages 28-35).

Day 1 of the meeting was concluded with sponsor talks from **Gary McMahon** of Makesafe Australia, **Chaiamon Chantarapitak** of Green Agro Science (Thailand) and **Dr How Yee Fatt** of Bentz Jaz (Singapore)

The following day was kicked off with one of the

industry stalwarts; **SuChart Lee**, President-Elect, FAOPMA, Thailand. SuChart featured as the ICON in the April 2020 issue of the FAOPMA Magazine (see: [https://faopma.com/Resources/FMFiles/Magazines/202004/FAOPMA\\_Magazine\\_2020\\_April\\_Page38-43\\_SuChart\\_Lee.pdf](https://faopma.com/Resources/FMFiles/Magazines/202004/FAOPMA_Magazine_2020_April_Page38-43_SuChart_Lee.pdf)). SuChart owns the largest privately owned pest management company in Thailand, King Service Centre, and discussed how his company was able to survive and even prosper in the financial crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic. His company made the conscious decision to have no layoffs and no pay cuts, and to achieve this amazing feat, they had to examine the cash flow situation and dip into fiscal reserves. Working time and expenditure was reduced, hygiene services added, and they prepared for the post pandemic world by adding new processes.

The presentation that was voted the best of the meeting by the attendees was provided by **Taro Kanazawa**, Vice President of FAOPMA, Japan.



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Taro's title was '*Competitive strategies for small pest control operators, now and amid COVID-19*'. Taro noted that the pest control marketing is still growing in spite of the pandemic. Moreover, larger companies are not growing faster than the smaller companies even though news of mergers and acquisitions by the multinational corporations dominate headlines in pest control circles. For smaller companies to be successful they must deliver on quality, be flexible, focus on niche markets such as certain cultural groups, and become known in the local community. Taro made the comment that a small company is unlikely to have specialised knowledge and thus it is best to share your information as your experience grows. He believes that hiding information is detrimental in the long-term as you create competitors and your knowledge will not develop.

The next speaker in the program was this month's ICON, **Regine Lim**, General Manager, Entopest Environmental Services, Malaysia (see Pages 16-23). Regine spoke on professionalism in a COVID-19 world; protecting employees and customer retention. She noted how it was difficult for pest managers to reach the client during lockdown, but fortunately most countries deemed pest control as an essential service. However, many staff faced issues during the lockdown and could not travel to work. Employee protection became the number one issue, in order to protect themselves and the customer. Regine believes that pandemic has led to an enhancement in the level of professionalism within the industry.

The following three talks focused on monitoring during COVID-19. This included the monitoring of stored product pests by **Rikiya Sasaki**, Senior Manager R&D, Fuji Flavor, Japan; remote



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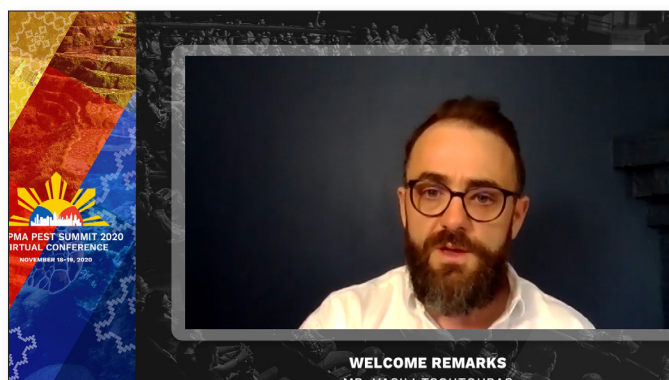
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monitoring of rodents by **Deanne Baptista**, Director, Cre8tec Pte Ltd, Singapore; and remote monitoring of flies by former FAOPMA President, **Junichiro Katayama**, who is also President of Semco Co. in Japan. All discussed how early detection of the pest can be achieved through effective monitoring, and that remote monitoring has huge financial benefits in reducing workload costs.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, many pest control companies added sanitation and disinfection to their service. Thus presentations on this topic were important and the following two presentations examined the use of disinfectants. **Ujjwal Kumar**, Business Head of fumigants, UPL, India reviewed the key considerations in the selection of disinfectants, while **Raju Parulkar**, Honorary Treasurer, FAOPMA (India) examined disinfection protocols.

Following the disinfection talks were 14 five minute presentations from the Presidents (or their representative) of the Associations that make up the FAOPMA family. Each speaker spoke on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the pest management industry in their own country. For the most part, the impacts were remarkably similar across the region. Many pest control companies lost short-term contracts and found it difficult to service clients, while payments were often delayed. Restaurants, bars, and tourism were especially hard hit, which in turn resulted in less work for pest control companies. Fortunately many took up disinfection services, which allayed some of the financial losses in other areas. Several papers from these talks appear in this issue (see Pages 64-70). Note that all of the presentations by the Presidents are available to view free from: <https://faopma.com/Conference/Summit-2020>. The welcome speech by the FAOPMA President, **Vasili Tsoutouras** can also be watched for free.

The final presentation on the program was by **Dr Raymond Lee**, Honorary Secretary FAOPMA, Malaysia. Prior to the virtual conference, Raymond conducted a survey with the aim of determining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the pest management industry. The results of this survey appear in this issue of the FAOPMA Magazine (see Pages 36-43).



FAOPMA President, Mr Vasili Tsoutouras provided the welcoming remarks.

The event was wrapped up with closing speeches by **Josefina Dueñas** and **Vasili Tsoutouras**. Poignant comments from President Vasili's speech included; "This is a historical first for FAOPMA-Pest Summit, the virtual conference demonstrates the ability of the pest management industry to respond to COVID-19". "The world today is one small village and the pandemic of COVID-19 has demonstrated that no one country can operate in isolation..." "The future will be about communication, cooperation, and shared knowledge". How true Vasili!

Overall the Virtual Conference was extremely well received by the participants. Over 90% stated they were more than satisfied with the speakers, while almost 90% felt the program was excellent and the meeting well organized. These figures are testament to the quality of the speakers! Furthermore, over 85% felt the conference was directly relevant to their job. *Thus if you missed the meeting there is still an opportunity to register and watch all the talks* – you have until mid-November 2021 to do this! Registration is only USD\$50 and the talks can be viewed from <https://faopma.com/Conference/Summit-2020>. All presentations are available in English, Bahasa, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, and Thai.

Finally, I would like acknowledge the fact that I was privileged to work with an exciting and dynamic team on the Organizing Committee. This included the Chairperson **Josefina Dueñas** (Philippines) whose boundless energy and tireless drive made this event a possibility. Jojo was in turn supported by the Deputy Chairperson,

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**Hector Binwick** (1<sup>st</sup> Reserve Member of FAOPMA, Philippines). Also on the Organizing Committee was **Taro Kanazawa** (FAOPMA Vice-President, Japan), **Dr Raymond Lee** (FAOPMA Honorary Secretary, Malaysia), **Regine Lim** (MPMA VP/ Membership, Malaysia), **Raju Parulkar** (FAOPMA Honorary Treasurer, India), and **SuChart Lee** (FAOPMA President-Elect, India). My role was as the Program Chair and taking the Minutes of the weekly meetings (someone had to organize the organizers!). Thank you to all my colleagues for making a truly world class and memorable event, and being just a terrific bunch of folk – I miss our weekly catchup.

The next FAOPMA-Pest Summit will also be held in Manila, Philippines over 6-8/Oct/2021. It is envisaged that this will be a hybrid of a virtual and face-to-face meeting. Expect to see details in the

April 2021 issue of the FAOPMA Magazine.

Most importantly we wish to thank the companies that supported the event, firstly the Platinum Sponsors; **Bentz Jaz, Fuji Flavor, Green Agro Science, Make Safe Australia**, and **Ratsense**. Plus the Gold Sponsors; **Bayer, Brandenburg, Ensystex, Pest Tech**, and **Sandya Group**, plus all the exhibitors. Offering to sponsor a virtual event during such economically difficult times demonstrates that these companies have *supreme confidence* in their products, and I hope you in turn support these high quality businesses. ■

**Stephen Doggett** is the Director of Medical Entomology, Westmead Hospital, Sydney Australia, and the Chief Editor of the FAOPMA Magazine.

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## Notable quotes from FAOPMA-Pest Summit 2020 Virtual Conference

*"This conference is about identifying the challenges...about confronting the new paradigm of a COVID-19 world",*

**Vasili Tsoutouras**, FAOPMA President.

*"No one saw it [the pandemic] coming, no one wants it to come, and it is no one's fault that it came",*

**Prof Chow-Yang Lee**, Professor, University of California.

*"The next pandemic is considered to be mental health",*

**Dr Lourdes Fabia**, Founder, Evolverlink Consultancy Services.

*"With every opportunity is a great responsibility",*

**Josefina Dueñas**, Chairperson, FAOPMA-Pest Summit 2020.

*"No one can deny that COVID-19 has brought about enormous change",*

**Vasili Tsoutouras**, FAOPMA President.

*"Go with it (global change) or go against it",*

**Pascal Cai**, Vice President, Wells Fargo Bank.

*"AI [artificial intelligence] is changing our life",*

**Junichiro Katayama**, FAOPMA Past President.

*"Fighting COVID-19 requires a team effort on an unprecedented scale",*

**Raju Parulkar**, FAOPMA Honorary Treasurer.

*"Change is inevitable in this critical time",*

**Regine Lim**, General Manager, Entopest Environmental Services.

*"Preparation, prompt action, enhanced surveillance, cooperation, and science based solutions, are the key to COVID-19 control AND bed bug management",*

**Stephen L. Doggett**, FAOPMA Magazine, Chief Editor.

*"According to the World Bank, the pandemic represents the largest economic shock the world has ever seen",*

**Pascal Cai**, Vice President, Wells Fargo Bank.

*"The economic outlook remains exceptionally uncertain",*

**Pascal Cai**, Vice President, Wells Fargo Bank.

*"AI based monitoring will change the game of our industry",*

**Junichiro Katayama**, FAOPMA Past President.

*"Although climate change poses a greater danger to the long-term health of the planet, the onset of COVID-19 is too sudden and its impact too drastic",*

**Prof Chow-Yang Lee**, Professor, University of California.

*"73% of pest management companies have been impacted by the pandemic",*

**Dr Raymond Lee**, FAOPMA Honorary Secretary.

*"Small to medium sized pest control companies need to build long term relationships",*

**Taro Kanazawa**, FAOPMA Vice President.

*"PCOs became a vital force in the fight against the pandemic",*

**Mr Fu Youcai**, Chairman, Wuhan Lifetai Technology.

*"With any crisis, there is an opportunity",*

**Prof Chow-Yang Lee**, Professor, University of California.

*"During the pandemic, focus marketing on the existing customer",*

**Viren Merchant**, Director, PCAMB. ■