

## Preface

The 9th International Symposium on Nitrogen Fixation with Non Legumes, organized in Leuven, Belgium, September 1–5, 2002, hosted nearly 150 scientists from 35 countries.

The organizers aimed for an academic meeting highlighting past achievements, recent advances and future prospects. It was emphasized during the preparation and even at the start of the Symposium that new insights in the basic mechanisms ruling the complex interactions between microorganisms and plants, thereby promoting plant growth, plant nutrition and plant health, would be the theme of this edition. It was also obvious that, in pace with the tradition of these Symposia, the 9th edition would only meet its mission when questions as to how and where to apply this knowledge would critically be addressed during the presentations and discussions. In his keynote lecture, Marc Van Montagu has repeated this several times: "give agriculture the societal value it deserves". Science has to serve the society, and in this case, guide secure food production and quality.

The organizing committee has learned many things and by all means that it takes a lot of effort to organize an international meeting and that it can only be done with the help of many. During the preparation of the Symposium, the organizing committee decided to approach journal editors to seek the opportunity to publish a selection of the presentations in a special issue. We were very happy that the international journal *SYMBIOSIS* has agreed to do so, provided that manuscripts would be subjected to the standard peer review process. This special issue *SYMBIOSIS* could only be realized with the great help of the Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Margalith Galun.

We hope this issue of *SYMBIOSIS* finds many readers.

August Van Gool  
Yaacov Okon  
Jos Vanderleyden (Chair)