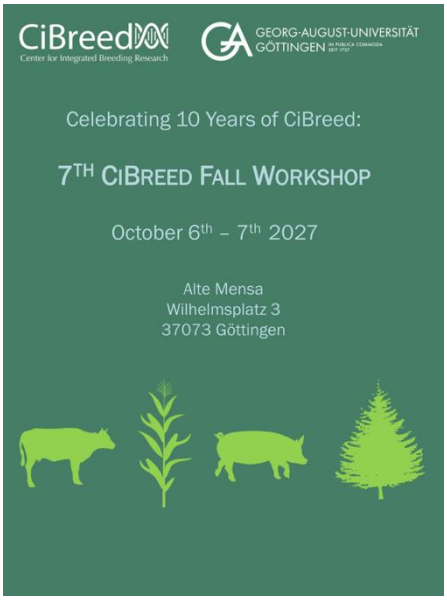
GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN IN PUBLICA COMMODA SEIT 1737

CiBreed Newsletter – November 2026

Center for Integrated Breeding Research

Dear CiBreed members, supporters and everyone affiliated with CiBreed,

The new semester has just begun. We would like to take that as an opportunity to look back at our past academic year with all its successful events and also announce exciting upcoming events for the future.
Please enjoy your read!



6th CiBreed Fall Workshop – The Big, the Small, the Unexpected: Perspectives of Breeding Research

Every other year, the CiBreed organizes a CiBreed Fall Workshop which aims to bring together all disciplines involved in breeding research. In addition, the workshops aim to provide students and young scientists with a platform to present themselves to experts from science and industry and to network with them.
On October 7 and 8, 2025, this CiBreed Fall Workshop took place for the sixth time organised by the CiCom Team and the CiBreed Director Prof. Dr. Stefan Scholten. More than 100 participants from academia, science, and industry met in Göttingen. The scientific part of the workshop consisted of three sessions and a poster session on the topic of "The BIG, the small, the Unexpected: Perspectives of Breeding Research".



The intention was to highlight cutting-edge advances from the big picture of GxE and genomic prediction to the fine-scale insights of stress physiology, long-read sequencing, and targeted insect resistance, our interdisciplinary workshop brings together diverse breeding perspectives across species and scales.

The three sessions - "The environment matters", "It's all about data", and "New breeding targets and species" - highlighted unexpected innovations shaping future breeding research.

held a talk about“Making big data better: leveraging known and latent environmental covariates for breeding high performing stable genotypes”, Amanda Chamberlain (Agriculture Victoria and La Trobe University, Centre for Agribioscience, Victoria, Australia) gave an online lecture about “Long read sequencing; A new frontier in genetic data for livestock”, and Nadine Austel (Julius Kühn-Institute for Ecological Chemistry, Plant Analysis and Stored Product Protection, Berlin)



All participants of the 6th CiBreed Fall Workshop

Each session was chaired by CiBreed PhD students and opened by invited key note speakers: Salma Balazadeh (Faculty of Biology and Psychology, University of Göttingen) talked about “Endophytic Flavobakterium Enhances Root Hair Plasticity and Plant Resilience under Drought”, Daniel Tolhurst (The Roslin Institute and Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Science, University of Edinburgh, UK)

gave a talk about “Chemical ecology as key to identify new plant traits mediating insect resistance in oilseed rape and sugar beets”.

The poster session offered students from Goettingen and abroad a special opportunity to present and discuss their research findings. Participants were able to gain a comprehensive impression during the conference and nominate their favourite poster for the Poster Award.



The winners of the poster awards were:

1st place and 300€ to Qianfei Zhu (University of Giessen, Department of Agronomy and Crop Physiology): Optimization of Genomic Predictions Using Genome-Wide Association Studies

2nd place and 150€ to Muhammad Imran Khan (South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences & University of Goettingen & PMAS-Arid Agriculture University): Genetic Diversity and Selection Signatures in Murciano-Granadina and Beetal Goat Breeds: Elucidating Adaptive Mechanisms in Challenging Environments

2nd place and 150€ to Bright Enogieru Osatohanmwen (University of Goettingen, Plant Breeding Methodology): 2NPLGBM: A genomic model that merges the strengths of classical and machine learning methods in genomic prediction



The prize money was kindly funded by the Professor Werner Schulze-Foundation.

In addition to scientific talks and poster presentations, the two-day workshop also featured an “iPAB booth” organized by the students themselves, where students from the CiBreed-coordinated master's program “Integrated Plant and Animal Breeding” could present their CVs to potential internship or employers.



In addition, the CiBreed Communications Team (CiCom Team) organized the 2nd CiBreed Science Slam. Johanna Sophie Schlüter, a doctoral student in the Division of Breeding Informatics, moderated the Science Slam with great enthusiasm and fun and had the audience cheering. The winners of the 2nd CiBreed Science Slam were: 1st place and 250€ to Dennis Kamelin (University of Goettingen, Crop Plant Genetics)

2nd place and 150€ to Alexandra Weigt (University of Goettingen, Breeding Informatics)

This prize money was also kindly sponsored by the Professor Werner Schulze-Foundation.

It's exciting every year: Welcome Phase for iPAB Students of the Class of 2026/27

The welcome phase has successfully been launched for our incoming cohort of students for the academic year 2026/27, marking an important first step in the academic journey of the new class. Students were invited to join several university-wide orientation events, allowing them to connect with peers across disciplines and become familiar with the broader academic environment.



A key highlight of the welcome program is the iPAB Welcome Day, which takes place one week prior to the start of lectures. At this event, the new students get to know each other as a group for the first time and find out who they will be sharing the lecture hall with over the next few years. Fourteen new iPAB students participated in the event this year, designed to introduce them to the institute's academic focus, infrastructure, and community. The Welcome Day officially opened with a warm reception by Prof. Dr. Armin Schmitt, who greeted students and emphasized the importance of academic curiosity, collaboration, and engagement within the iPAB and CiBreed community. Afterwards, the iPAB coordinator Dr. Liane Schulz-Streeck gave an overview of the programme, its place within the faculty and its affiliation with CiBreed. Many questions regarding the programme structure and course selection but also about student life and study organisation were answered which helped students better understand the structure, expectations, and opportunities within the program and at our university.



After a short tour through the lecture rooms at the Albrecht-Thaer Weg, the iPAB student tutor Usama Afzal guided the new iPAB students to the north campus for a joint lunch at CGiN.

After lunch, the group was then ready to tackle the rest of the programme:
Students were offered a guided greenhouse tour conducted by Prof. Dr. Stefan Scholten, giving students a first look at practical research environments central to the study program. This was complemented by an in-depth tour through the Division of Biotechnology and Reproduction of Farm Animals as well as the Functional Breeding division led by Dr. Camilla Benedetti, providing valuable insights into current research activities and facilities.
Overall, the welcome phase for the iPAB class of 2026/27 successfully combined academic orientation, social interaction, and personal support, laying a strong foundation for a successful start to the program and a vibrant learning community.
WELCOME to our new iPAB students! We hope you'll enjoy your life and your studies here!



Join the CiCom team!

CiCom is the communication team of CiBreed. Consisting of MSc and PhD students, our group aims to facilitate research collaborations and interactions between the several CiBreed research groups in animal, plant and forest breeding. We also help in organizing CiBreed events like the upcoming CiBreed workshop.



Alexandra Weigt
PhD student
Breeding Informatics



Johanna-Sophie Schlüter-Bertram
PhD student
Breeding Informatics



Marie Bellersen
PhD student
Animal Breeding and Genetics



Quentin Burandt
PhD student
Plant Breeding Methodology



Elsa Gurban
M.Sc. Student
iPAB

Get in touch with us and don't miss any updates on our social media channels!

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CiBreed
cibreed

CiBreed Week 2026 – A break from the daily grind, and straight into breeding

Two exciting excursions took us away from our daily routine of lectures, office work and lab work.

The week kicked off with a visit to the KWS Talent Campus, where we gained fascinating insights into the research and development work of one of the world's leading companies in plant breeding. The exchange with KWS experts was particularly inspiring for many of us – a big thank you to everyone involved for the warm welcome!



At KWS Talent Campus

Bright and early in the morning of June 2, we set off for the University of Göttingen's experimental farms. There, we got a firsthand look at how our University's research on plant and animal sciences is applied in practice.

A huge thank you to the on-site team, especially to Dr. Dirk Augustin, for the engaging tours and valuable practical insights!



Prof. Dr. Scholten and some of the students looking at trout pounds in Elliehausen

The week concluded with our International Potluck on the evening of June 2. It was wonderful to see how many of you brought traditional dishes from your home countries – from savory to sweet, there was something



Finishing off the potluck dinner with a card game

CiBreed Week 2026 once again demonstrated how enriching the exchange between research, practice, and different cultures can be. A heartfelt thank you to all participants who made this week so special!

Interview with Prof. Dr. Akash Chawade



Since June 2026, Aakash Chawade is leading the team of Plant Breeding Methodology at Göttingen. We got to ask him some questions about his vision for the future at University of Göttingen as well as the role of CiBreed .

Why did you specialize in plant breeding? What caught your interest in this field?

I specialized in plant breeding because the field is undergoing a fundamental transition from conventional, experience-based approaches to data-driven and increasingly AI-driven breeding. What caught my interest is that this shift creates both exciting challenges and new opportunities to develop and study novel hypotheses such as how to integrate genomics, phenomics, and AI to predict traits, speed up selection, and build cost-efficient, climate-adapted breeding pipelines. I wanted to help shape that transformation and train the next generation of breeders to work at the interface of biology, data science, and artificial intelligence.

How would you describe your work/research in one sentence everyone could understand?

My research modernizes plant breeding pipelines by developing cost-efficient methods that integrate genomics, phenomics and AI to breed climate-adapted crops faster for farmers.

What motivated you to join the faculty at the University of Göttingen? / What aspects of our research environment in Göttingen or institutional strengths align with your goals?

I joined Göttingen in June 2026 to lead the Division of Plant Breeding Methodology. This division is one of the central divisions of the Department of Crop Sciences and of CiBreed. The role aligns with my goals of advancing translational plant science and developing genomics, phenomics and AI tools that are adopted by breeding programs. Leading a division that is explicitly dedicated to the “how” of plant-breeding, and cultivar development offers me a platform to shape the next generation of plant breeding methodology.

What are your hopes/plans for your membership in CiBreed?

My hopes are to help develop core expertise in plant breeding methodology, to educate and train the

next generation of breeders and scientists, and to work as a team with other CiBreed divisions and industry partners to address the most challenging questions we face due to climate change. By contributing my research on cost-efficient breeding tools, I want to strengthen CiBreed's integrated breeding mission, build collaboration across disciplines, and translate our efforts into climate-adapted crops and more resilient agricultural systems.

Which of your current courses or teaching modules are most closely related to plant breeding, genetics, or crop improvement? How do you integrate research into your teaching?

All modules taught by us are focused on plant breeding, genetics, and crop improvement and are offered across the iPAB Master's program, the Master's in Agriculture, and the Bachelor's program. We integrate our research directly into this teaching by using the division's active work on crops such as maize, faba bean, cereals, potato, and quinoa as case studies, by teaching modern methods for analyzing high-throughput genotyping and phenotyping data, by having students critically discuss recent research papers and present their findings in seminars, and by supervising experimental Bachelor's and Master's theses and lab internships so that students learn breeding methodology through real, ongoing research problems.

Are there opportunities for (iPAB) students to do their Master's thesis with your group?

Yes. The division page explicitly lists "supervision of experimental theses" as part of the division's duties. iPAB students interested in genomics, phenomics, AI or breeding methodology can approach us for thesis opportunities.

Akash's future vison:

Open collaboration with industry partners, where knowledge and results are exchanged freely within mutually agreed frameworks, is critical for the development of plant breeding and the region. It speeds up the translation of research into practice, ensures that breeding programs can access cost-efficient modern tools, and creates a feedback loop where real-world challenges shape new research questions. However, for this to be successful, we need three key elements: breeding pipeline data to be openly accessible for research, strong day-to-day contact with breeders, and a joint strategy and vision for the future. I see CiBreed as an ideal hub for this kind of open, pre-competitive collaboration bringing together academia, industry, and students to tackle climate-related breeding challenges faster and more effectively, while training the next generation of breeders and scientists.

CiBreed Executive Board and Director Appointed for the Next Two-Year Term

A new CiBreed Executive Board has been appointed with effect from May 26, 2026 by the CiBreed General Assembly. With its broad representation across the faculties, the newly appointed Executive Board reflects the interdisciplinary structure of the institution. The board will serve for a period of two years, while the term of office for the student member is one year.

During their consecutive meeting, the Executive Board elected Prof. Dr. Stefan Scholten as the CiBreed Director and Prof. Dr. Jens Tetens as the deputy Director of CiBreed for the next two years.

Group of professors:

Prof. Dr. Stefan Scholten (CiBreed Director; Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)
Prof. Dr. Salma Balazadeh (Faculty of Biology and Psychology)
Prof. Dr. Jens Tetens (CiBreed Deputy Director; Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)
Prof. Dr. O. Gailing (Faculty of Forest Sciences and Forest Ecology)

Deputies:

Prof. Dr. Dr. Bertram Brenig (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)
Prof. Dr. José Martínez (Faculty of Law)
Prof. Dr. Armin O. Schmitt (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)
Prof. Dr. Achim Spiller (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)

Group of scientists:

PD Dr. Clemens Falker-Gieske (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)

Deputy:

Dr. Lisa Maria Rienesl (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)

Group of students:

Marie Franziska Bellersen (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)

Deputy:

Alexandra Weigt (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences)

Group of technical/ administrative staff (qua office):

Dr. Liane Schulz-Streeck (CiBreed)

Deputy:

Ayse Caglier-Yücesoy (CiBreed)

Faculty of Biology and Psychology becomes supporting faculty for CiBreed

With the Faculty of Biology and Psychology as its new supporting faculty, the Centre for Integrated Breeding Research (CiBreed) is strengthening the link between basic biological research and applied breeding research. This gives the centre greater scientific breadth and interdisciplinary strength. This is an important step in the strategic development of CiBreed. The faculty of biology and psychology will expand the centre's expertise in genetics, molecular and cell biology, developmental biology and evolutionary biology. The new organisational structure opens up opportunities for joint research initiatives, the further development of teaching and the support of early-career researchers. The shared use of scientific infrastructure and methodological resources is also being strengthened. The integration of the further faculty underlines CiBreed's commitment to bringing together researchers from different disciplines under one roof and to further raising the profile of breeding research in Göttingen.

We wish everyone a successful end of 2026
and hope to see many of you next year!

