

Foreword

Expanding our Society for Environmental Biotechnology

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Environmental biotechnology spans an extremely wide area of research and covers fields such as bioremediation and an array of biorelated eco-friendly technologies. According to the International Society for Environmental Biotechnology (ISEB), environmental biotechnology is defined as the integration of science and engineering for the development, use and regulation of biological systems for remediation of contaminated environments (land, air, water), and for environment-friendly processes development (green manufacturing technologies and sustainable development). With the continuing increase in the world population and in the social activities that come with it, we can presume that the importance of environmental biotechnology can only go up. For those engaged in environmental biotechnology in Japan, the Japanese Society for Environmental Biotechnology (JSEB) plays a major role in providing information and opportunities to bring people together to discuss their latest progress in research. The importance of this role too, will only go up.

Are there any possibilities to further promote the activities of the Society and perhaps bring more people together? One may be to clearly state the fields of research that our Society actively welcomes. The term environmental biotechnology gives an impression of a tremendously vast field, which it is, and it might not be easy for individuals (non-members) to realize how closely related their research is to our Society and our mission. One extreme proposal would be to establish divisions in the Society that provide more focus; with keywords and examples that would send a clear message to the scientist that their fields are important to us. For instance, Division: Biomass utilization, Keywords: cellulose, chitin, compost, hemicellulose, lignin, straw, wood, xylan, Division: Global warming, Keywords: carbon dioxide fixation, hydrogen production, methanogens, photosynthesis, plant engineering and so on. Establishing divisions is in no way intended to narrow our focus as a Society in total, but rather to recognize the variety of topics that we are (or should be) attending to. There may be topics that are not addressed by any active member in the Society today, and these may be areas where our Society can expand in the future. This would also help us to realize which fields we can cooperate with other societies in promoting particular fields of science and technology. One may say that establishing divisions in a society of our size may not be practical, and this is a point that needs further consideration. In that case, it may be sufficient just to present these research areas and keywords on our homepage and/or our announcements for the annual congress.

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