



PRESS RELEASE:

# PURPLE4LIFE FIRST WORKSHOP IN MONS SIGNALS BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND FEED INNOVATION



*The Purple4Life and PURPLEGAIN Workshop in Mons, Belgium (2026)*

## About the Workshop

Mons, Belgium – On 19–20 March 2026, the University of Mons (UMONS) hosted a successful two-day international workshop titled **“Boosting the use of Purple Phototrophic Bacteria (PPB) as innovative food and feed ingredients: From metabolism to health-promoting effects.”** The event was jointly organised by the Purple4Life project and the PurpleGain COST Action project, bringing together a diverse community of scientists, regulatory experts, entrepreneurs, and innovators from across Europe and beyond.

Marking the 1st event in the Purple4Life workshop series, the gathering reflected the growing momentum behind PPB as a versatile and sustainable biotechnology platform. With six expert keynote speakers and a programme of oral presentations, poster pitches, and networking sessions, the event delivered two days of substantive scientific exchange and cross-sector dialogue, from fundamental research, regulatory policy, and commercial application.

## Day 1 – 19 March 2026

Day one opened with the first scientific session on PPB metabolism and improved production. **Dr. Andrew Hitchcock** (University of Sheffield, UK) delivered the keynote on light capture in PPB, covering fundamental mechanisms and longer-term research perspectives. His presentation set the tone for a session that addressed one of the field's most pressing production challenges: how to harness light more efficiently at scale.

This was followed by a presentation by Javier Llamas Saus on environmental stress as a driver of pigment modulation in *Rhodobacter capsulatus*, and three further oral presentations after the morning break: María José García López on bioelectrochemical production of food-grade compounds by *Rhodospseudomonas* during biogas upgrading; Sara Olyslaegers on the impact of salinity on pigments and antioxidant properties of purple bacteria; and Salim Kichouh Aiadi on light management strategies to improve PPB productivity. A poster session was held during the lunch break.



*Mari Eskola, Christoph Von Holst and Marta Ponghellini at the Purple4Life and PURPLEGAIN Workshop in Mons, Belgium (2026)*

The afternoon session addressed the regulatory landscape for PPB in food and feed markets. **Dr. Mari Eskola** (Medfile, Finland) outlined the roadmap to novel food authorisation; **Marta Ponghellini** (Food Chain and Animal Health, Belgium) addressed the regulatory path to the feed additive market under European food chain and animal health legislation; and **Christoph Von Holst** (European Commission Joint Research Centre, Belgium) examined which analytical methods are most critical for regulatory dossier preparation. The three speakers then participated in a roundtable on regulatory challenges and policy evolution. The evening oral session featured presentations by Beatrice Aiuto on safety evaluation of PPB biomass using in vitro and in silico methods, Olivier Talon on a life cycle assessment of bacterial biomass as a food product within the PROTEBoost project, and Manon Gilson on directed evolution for improved upcycling of glucose-rich by-products using phototrophic purple bacteria. A poster pitch session followed, with five-minute presentations by Guillaume Bayon-Vicente, Chiara Capelli, Aditi Parmar Chitharanjan, Karima Guehaz, and Prashant Anand covering topics ranging from molasses-based biomass production to resource recovery in open systems. The day concluded with a networking dinner.

## Day 2 – 20 March 2026

Day two opened directly with the first scientific session on PPB as a feed ingredient. **Katerina Kousoulaki** (Nofima, Norway) delivered the keynote on innovative uses of PPB biomass to improve feed quality in aquaculture, followed by a presentation by Luis Diaz Allegue on the improved colour, health, and nutrition of ornamental fish fed with purple bacteria. The morning oral session included presentations by Anna Simon on enhancing omega-3 long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acid biosynthesis in rainbow trout, Emeline Dierge on tailoring egg lipids through hen nutrition, Trine Ytrestøl on the interaction of diet and environment in controlling flesh colour in salmon, and Liudmyla Fihurska on the valorisation of food industry by-products for single-cell protein production. A poster session was held during the lunch break.

The afternoon session focused on PPB as a human health-promoting ingredient. **Plácido Navas** (Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Spain) delivered the keynote on CoQ10 and human health, presenting evidence for the role of this compound in mitochondrial function and its potential as a nutraceutical derived from PPB biomass. This was followed by presentations from Naïm Blansaer on vitamin B12 production under varying growth conditions and Daniel José Moreno Fernández-Ayala on lipid extraction and CoQ10 quantification in PPB. After the break, Malou Nuyts presented on the bioaccessibility of PPB as a sustainable protein source during in vitro digestion, and Rosaria Tizzani on optimising spray-drying to maximise antioxidant capacity in purple bacterial biomass. These presentations collectively addressed a critical question for market readiness: not merely whether PPB contains beneficial compounds, but whether those compounds survive processing and remain accessible to the human body.

The workshop closed with concluding remarks and a networking reception. Participants left with a shared understanding of the scientific progress achieved, the regulatory steps that remain, and the collaborative effort required to bring PPB-based products to market.