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## New plant pathologist to work with field crop diseases

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### **Abstract**

In her new position, Alison Robertson will spend her time doing extension and research work on field crop diseases. "My main purpose is to help the farmer," says Robertson, assistant professor, Plant Pathology Department, Iowa State University. "When I started my career, I never planned to go to graduate school. I really liked interacting with farmers, getting dirty, and working in the field," she says.

### **Disciplines**

Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Plant Pathology

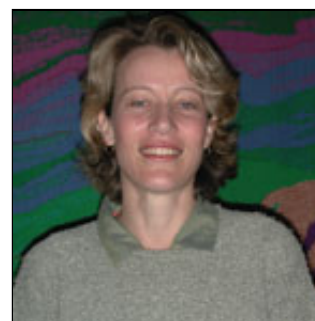
# INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT

## **New plant pathologist to work with field crop diseases**

In her new position, Alison Robertson will spend her time doing extension and research work on field crop diseases. "My main purpose is to help the farmer," says Robertson, assistant professor, Plant Pathology Department, Iowa State University.

"When I started my career, I never planned to go to graduate school. I really liked interacting with farmers, getting dirty, and working in the field," she says.

In some ways her background may seem foreign to the work she will be doing at ISU. She was born and raised in Zimbabwe, and earned her bachelor's degree in plant pathology at the University of Natal in South Africa. She then worked at a tobacco research station in Zimbabwe, as the extension plant pathologist. There she spent her time doing field days, visiting farms, and doing research on plant diseases including bacterial wilt.



*Alison Robertson*

"I worked extensively with growers, diagnosing tobacco problems and advising them on disease management options. That's where I developed my love for extension," she says.

She returned to the classroom and earned a Masters in Plant Pathology from the University of Zimbabwe in 1999. In 2003, she earned her doctorate degree in Plant Pathology from South Carolina's Clemson University.

"I enjoyed my time in the laboratory there, but I missed interacting with extension personnel and growers, and working in the field. I was interested in this position because it is primarily extension," she says.

"My experience at the Tobacco Research Board will enable me to relate with extension personnel, growers, and the industry in Iowa, Robertson said. "In addition, many soil-borne pathogens, for example Pythium, Phytophthora Rhizoctonia, and Fusarium are as much a problem on tobacco as they are on soybean and corn. I see my molecular background playing an important role in understanding the biology and population structure of pathogens and thereby enhancing disease management options available to growers."

Robertson also will develop short- and long-term research projects that target diseases in Iowa corn and soybean fields and is already part of the College of Agriculture team working on soybean rust.

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