Chiara Tonelli

Chiara Tonelli is Professor of Genetics at University of Milan, Italy, and leader of the Plant Molecular Genetic Group of the Department of Biomolecular Sciences and Biotechnology of the same University. She is an EMBO member, the European Molecular Biology Organisation.

Her scientific interests span from fundamental aspects of plant biology to biotechnological applications. The major focus of her studies is to deciphere the logic of transcriptional control and gene regulation in plant during development and in the interaction with the environment. She contributed to the identification and molecular characterization of regulatory gene families responsible for the coordinate control of flavonoids and anthocyanin metabolic pathways. She discovered an interaction among duplicated genes, termed REED (Reduced Expression of Endogenous Duplications), an epigenetic mechanism of silencing mediated by DNA methylation of their promoter regions. More recently she discovered the first transcription factor specifically regulating stomata movements in the plant; this finding opens new possibilities to improve crop survival and productivity in water scarcity conditions.

She has served on numerous national and international scientific committees and science advisory boards. Currently she is board member of the European Plant Science Organisation (EPSO) and member of the Research and Technological Transfer Committee of the University of Milan. She is reviewer for scientific journals (Molecular Cell, Molecular and Cellular Biology, EMBO Journal, Plant Cell, Plant Journal, Plant Molecular Biology) and for international granting Agency (USDA, EMBO, TWAS, Human Frontier).

Since 2005 she is Secretary General of the "Future of Science Conference", a cycle of international conferences gathering together eminent experts from various disciplines addressing to the different spheres of the society with the aim to bring Science in Society, choosing every year a theme crucial to society, to underline the contribution and implications of scientific progress to everyday life.