

MARÍA LORETO PRAT, born in Santiago, Chile (1968), is Doctor in Biotechnology (Field: molecular biology of fruit species, University Andrés Bello, Chile, 2014), Magister Scientiae (University of Chile, 2004, Field: plant growth regulators in arid zone plants) and Agricultural Engineering (University of Chile, 1994). She is currently Professor at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences of the University of Chile, where she teaches undergraduate courses in Plant Anatomy and Plant Propagation, and in Plant Cell Biology at the postgraduate level. Currently she is a Member of the Academic Committee of the Magister in Agricultural Scientiae program in her Faculty. Her research interest is in the introduction and evaluation of new fruit species to Chile, including succulents for arid zones. She is involved in research with *Opuntia ficus-indica*, including its micropropagation and plant anatomy. She was the head of the Scientific Committee of the IX International Congress on Cactus pear and Cochineal (Coquimbo, Chile, 2017) and one of the authors of the FAO Book “Crop ecology, cultivation and uses of cactus pear”. She has authored or coauthored several publications including book chapters, scientific publications, conference presentations and extension publications, both in fruit crops and in biotechnology.