

ANNIVERSARY

PROFESSOR JÓZSEF ANTAL, A PROMINENT SCHOLAR OF CROP SCIENCE IS 95 YEARS OLD

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Professor József Antal (photo: M. Birkás)

Crop production is one of the most ancient activities of mankind. All scientific disciplines in the World are dedicated to the development of human race, however all of them are highly influenced by the people contributing results of mental power to that. Professor József Antal, a most prominent scholar of crop production research in Hungary, is one of those, whoever has done it. His life, his intellectual behaviour has been performing an everlasting record in the field of crop science.

He was born in a nobleman's family in Marosbogát, Transylvania in 1919. He was educated in the János Bolyai Protestant College at Marosvásárhely. Following agricultural studies at the Agricultural Faculty of the Kolozsvár University from 1937. He graduated with an excellent degree in 1943. Also, he got his first teaching experiences at the alma mater. As a young teacher he had to join the army. From

1943 until the end of the World War he was a soldier in the Hungarian army. On one of the last days of the war he was captured by the Russian troops, and as a prisoner of war he was kept in a lager in the Soviet Union until 1948. From 1948 to 1952 he was employed by the agricultural administration of Csongrád County in Hungary. He was engaged in various fields of education and public administration. In a long period between 1952 and 1974 he was a researcher in the Agricultural Research Institute of the Southern Great Plain, which was succeeded by the present Cereal Research Institute in Szeged. In this institute he has experienced all levels of a scientific career; from research assistant to the position of the director of research.

In 1974 he was appointed to be a professor at the Gödöllő University of Agricultural Sciences. As an experienced and renowned scientist he was

invited to be the head of the Crop Production Institute of the university. Since that time his personality labels the scientific and educational activities of Gödöllő in crop science. He had been the professor of crop production, head of department and then that of institute, and today he is a highly appreciated professor emeritus, - simply a father of all crop production scientists.

A brief summary of his exceptional scientific work. In the beginning he has taken part in the mapping of the highland pastures in the area of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains. Later he was engaged in scientific research related to potato and sunflower production. Most of his active life was dedicated to the research of sandy soil's agronomy; he used to be a forerunner in cultivation of sandy soil areas as well as a successful breeder of bean varieties adapted to such conditions.

He had run extensive crop rotation trials as well as green manure field experiments. There were a wide range of field crops he worked with; legumes, fodder crops, medicinal plants and potato secondary cropping. His results in the field of oil seed radish are of international importance. Also he has contributed plant nutrition practices with his research results. In the field of agro-ecology he has established a series of basic principles.

The practical implementation of scientific results. Apart from his basic and applied research activities he has been involved in extension and innovation projects. Crop production technologies developed by him were widely used by small holders and large estates and by various extension services and government authorities.

He has been a diligent and successful writer all along his life. Just a short bibliographic budget: Professor Antal has written eleven books, over hundred scientific papers and numerous other publications. His main works are the „Növénytermesztés homokon” (Crop production on sandy soils) and the „Növénytermesztők zsebkönyve” (Crop production vademecum) – the „antal” – as it is labelled by generations of agronomists and farmers.

The crown of his lifelong work is the last edition of the national handbook „Növénytermesztés” (Crop production), which serves the education of four universities and six agricultural colleges, and thousands of farmers.

He defended his CSc dissertation in 1956, and he was given the DSc title in 1974. He possesses many national and international scientific awards. Some of the most important ones: Westsik Vilmos insigneum (1989), Beethoven-Brunswick plaque (1989), Gisevius prize (1994), Baross László insigneum (1994), and last but not least the highest award of crop production of Hungary, the Surányi insigneum (2005).

Professor József Antal is 95 years old by now. He is active as he has always been during his life. A whole society of colleagues, students, theoretical and practical agriculturists surround him, and he broadcasts miracles of his personality and rudiments of a wisdom he possesses.

In the name of the scientific community, we would like to express our thanks to his work and results, and at the same time to wish him good health and further prosperous years.