

IN MEMORIAM

Prof. Hristo Georgiev was a leading geneticist and tomato breeder. He was born on January 7, 1927 in Sliven. He graduated and earned his PhD at the Plovdiv Agricultural University. In 1958 Georgiev moved to Sofia, to the Institute of Horticulture (lately Institute of Genetics “Prof. D. Kostov” and recently Institute of Plant Physiology and Genetics).

As a researcher as well as a Head of the Department of Heterosis, for decades Prof. Hristo Georgiev has played a vital role in the development of tomato genetics and breeding in Bulgaria. His scientific interests covered a wide scope of topics including heterosis and its exploitation in tomato breeding, high nutritive quality, tolerance to biotic and abiotic stresses. Prof. Georgiev’s findings and achievements have proved to be equally important to theory and practice. One of the most intriguing problems that Prof. Georgiev approached in his studies was to find ways to facilitate tomato hybrid seed production. For this purpose he and his team concentrated on detailed studies of different types of genetic male sterility. At present, a significant number of hybrids released and widely used in Bulgaria have a sterile seed parent (sterility controlled by gene *positional sterility - ps 2*) that increases the efficiency of the process of hybrid seed production.

Prof. Georgiev’s involvement in the progressive development of tomato genetics and breeding is evidenced by a significant number of publications and tomato hybrids developed over the last 40 years. He is an author or a co-author of more than 150 scientific articles and of widely used tomato hybrids (Cristy, Balkan, Kom, Rila, Precoce, Parris, Kalina, Bonus, Reyana, Rosalina Rossa) and cultivars for fresh consumption and canning (Drujba 1300, Mercury, Bella, Venera, Spartak, Bononya, Trapezitza, Carobeta, that was the first Bulgarian cultivar with high β -carotene content).

A significant number of agronomists, among them researchers from Romania, Vietnam, Togo and Egypt have earned their PhD under the supervision of Prof. Georgiev.

Prof. Georgiev retired officially in 1991 but continued actively to work in the field of tomato genetics and breeding. Since 1994, for more than 10 years he had been working as a scientific consultant of the Seed World Company in Grand Canaries. He also founded the first privately owned company for tomato breeding in Bulgaria - Geosemselect.

Prof. Georgiev never stopped preferring to become closely acquainted with all of his tomato plants and never tired of examining them. He continued actively to work in the field of tomato genetics and breeding up to his last day in Grand Canaries - 23 July 2012.

An extraordinary person left us – a scientist and a man who bestowed on us to fight, to defend our positions and ideas, to look forward, and to never stop seeking.

Prof. Bistra Atanasova, DrSc