

OBITUARY

György VÁRALLYAY (1935 - 2018)

Márton JOLÁNKAI

Crop Production Institute, Szent István University, Páter Károly utca 1., H-2100 Gödöllő, Hungary
E-mail: jolankai.marton@mkk.szie.hu

It is not easy to accept losses. The most crucial losses in our life we ever experience is the death of a person who had profound influence in making and managing a better society. Professor Várallyay was founder and a most active editorial board member of Columella Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. On one hand he was a scientist, an excellent pedologist, an appreciated and renowned professor. On the other hand he was much more than that. He was a wise man with an ability to access anyone, and that made him to be a most successful person disseminating knowledge and teaching the public.



György VÁRALLYAY (1935 - 2018)

He was born in an academic family on the 17th of July 1935 in Debrecen. His father himself was a professor engaged in soil science at the famous Mosonmagyaróvár College. We may assume that György Várallyay has been initiated to follow the family traditions from his childhood.

He was student of the Gödöllő Agricultural University, wherefrom he graduated in 1957. From the very beginning he was involved in soil research. Between 1957 and 1960 he was employed by the National Institute of Agricultural Quality Testing (OMMI) where he was a junior research fellow experiencing in soil mapping, melioration and extension.

In 1960 he was appointed by the Research Institute for Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (RISSAC), his second and last workplace. He has been involved in various research programmes aiming the exploration, remediation and utilization of saline soils which represent a huge tract within arable lands in Hungary. This research have yielded his first scientific degrees; a PhD in 1964 and a CSc in 1968. During these years he started his active participation in the international scientific community. He became a member of the International Soil Science Society, and also, he joined an expert mission in Jemen.

1969 can be considered as the beginning of a new phase in his scientific research. After completing a scholarship in the Netherlands, he introduced novel methodology in the field of soil physics and water management in Hungary. His scientific research results contributed to almost all methodology standards in these fields.

From 1976 he was the head of the Soil Science Department of RISSAC. He was a key member of the nationwide research programme “The determination of the agro-ecological potential of Hungary” lead by István Láng. During this work he managed to design a series of 1:100.000 scale soil maps of Hungary. Between 1981 and 1997 he was the director of the institute. According to his high skills in management and coordination, he became one of the most successful leaders within the scientific network of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The scientific activities, his contribution to the national and international scientific organisations is enormous. He has been a member, secretary and later president of the Soil Science Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has also been an active participant of high level governmental bodies in the field of scientific qualification and environmental decision making. He has been a member of the highest scientific committees of all the four Hungarian agricultural university faculties. He defended his DSc thesis in 1988. He was elected to be the member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1993 CM; 1998 FM). He was awarded to be an external member of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. He was a founder of the Alps Adria Scientific Cooperation, an organisation integrating scientists of various countries of the geographic region. He was the president of the Hungarian Soil Science Society between 1990 and 1999.

His exceptional scientific output is labelled with more than 800 scientific publications and almost 2000 citations referring to those. He was editorial board member of a wide range of scientific journals (*Acta Agronomica Hungarica*, *Archives of Agronomy and Soil Science*, *Columella*, *Geoderma*, *Hidrológiai Közlöny*, *International Agrophysics*, *Land Degradation and Rehabilitation*, *Soil Technology*). Also he was the editor-in-chief of the *Agrokémia és Talajtan* from 1997 to 2014.

He was appreciated by many national and international scientific awards. Some of the most important ones: Magyar Köztársasági Érdemrend Középkeresztje 1997, Széchenyi Prize (2004), and last but not least the highest award in the field of crop production - the Surányi insignum (2015).

Professor György Várallyay left us. We miss him. He was a good friend, a wise man, a learned scientist, a brilliant teacher and last but not least an active member of our community. Simply we may state that he was a man of spiritual power, with a mission to enrich society.