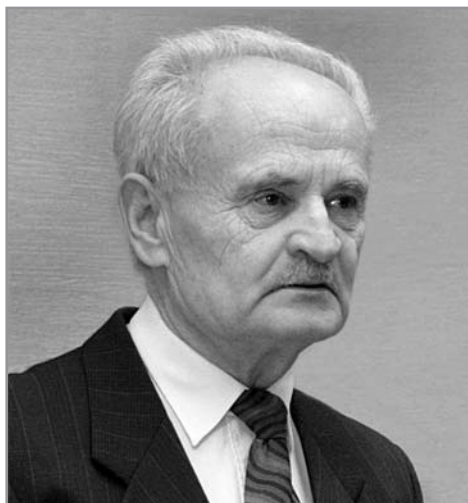


CHRONICLE

Algirdas Sliesaravičius – a renowned Lithuanian geneticist, initiator and originator of plant biotechnology research



Algirdas Sliesaravičius – a member of the Editorial Board of the scientific journal “Žemdirbystė-Agriculture”, a renowned agronomist, geneticist, Lithuanian Science Award winner, doctor habilitatus of biomedical sciences is celebrating the 75th anniversary.

The future scientist was born on 12th December, 1939 in Butrimonys, Alytus district. He studied at the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture's (LAA) Faculty of Agronomy. After graduation in 1963, he started working at LAA's Department of Botany-Microbiology as an assistant, lectured on microbiology and plant physiology. In 1965, he enrolled on a course of doctoral studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Botany and in 1970 defended a thesis and gained a doctoral degree in biology sciences. He was employed at the Laboratory of Plant Mutagenesis of Institute of Botany of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

In 1975, he was invited to set up a Laboratory of Genetics and Cytology at the Forage Crops Breeding Centre established under the auspices of Lithuanian Institute of Agriculture in Dotnuva, Kėdainiai district. Important plant breeding activities were carried out in this laboratory: experimental polyploidy, diallel crossing and trait inheritance, interspecific hybridization of clover, karyotype studies on forage grasses, intergeneric hybridization between ryegrass and fescue, and others. Algirdas Sliesaravičius was the initiator of these new research fields, author of new methods, and scientific supervisor. The method of *in vitro* cultivation of

isolated embryos was mastered; the first intergeneric hybrids between ryegrass and fescue (*Festulolium*) were developed in Lithuania. Later, in co-operation with the plant breeder Dr. S. Nekrašas, he developed *Festulolium* varieties 'Punia', 'Vėtra', 'Puga' and 'Linus DS' which are included in the National and European Union Plant Variety Catalogues. On the basis of this research, a forage grass genetic research school was created. While being in charge of the laboratory, A. Sliesaravičius was the first in the former Soviet Union to have written and published a monograph “Genetic methods in forage grass breeding” in 1992 in Saint Petersburg, prepared a doctor habilitatus thesis and defended it in 1993.

In 1989, A. Sliesaravičius started working as an associate professor at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture's Department of Crop Production, during 1994–2004 he was in charge of the Department of Crop Production, later Department of Crop Production and Animal Husbandry, in 1994–1995 he concurrently held the position of professor at Vytautas Magnus University's Department of Biology. In 1994, A. Sliesaravičiui was conferred the scientific title of professor and in the same year he was elected member-expert of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, in 2000 – corresponding member and in 2011 – full member.

Prof. A. Sliesaravičius led numerous programmes, projects and commissioned undertakings. He increased his qualifications at Moscow K. Timiriachev Academy of Agriculture (1980), Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Plant Genetics (1996) and Belarus Academy of Sciences' Institute of Genetics and Cytology (1999). A total of 15 doctoral theses have been defended under his supervision. He was an active member of theses evaluation committees: member of defence committee of 22 doctoral theses, chaired 7 theses defence committees, member of 14 habilitation work committees and habilitation procedures committees.

Prof. A. Sliesaravičius arranged scientific conferences in Lithuania and made presentations both in national and international scientific events in Austria, Germany, India, Spain, Sweden, Czech Republic and Ukraine.

Prof. A. Sliesaravičius paid a lot of attention to studies on non-traditional and introduced plants (spelt, winter oats, winter peas, soy, falseflax, seakale) under Lithuania's climate conditions; in collaboration with

colleagues, accumulated gene fund of vetch, vetchling and soy varieties and conducted their testing. In 2001, prof. A. Sliesaravičius was presented Lithuanian Science Award for his achievements in genetic research on forage grasses. He took an active part in the development of the national organic seed production system, prepared a curriculum of this subject and a lectured it to postgraduate students. Prof. A. Sliesaravičius was chairperson of the Science Committee of the Senate of the Lithuanian University of Agriculture (currently – Aleksandras Stulginskis University), Editorial Board member of the journals “Vagos”, “Žemdirbystė-Agriculture”, “Sodininkystė ir daržininkystė”, member of the State Plant Variety Assessment Committee, chairperson of Division of Agronomy of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences’ Department of Agriculture and Forestry, a representative of European Plant breeding association (EUCARPIA) for Lithuania, member of steering committee for Genetically Modified Organisms Management (Ministry of Environment) and Permanent Commission on Plant Genetic Resources.

A. Sliesaravičius publications are of great scientific, educational and cognitive value. In 2005, in cooperation with prof. V. Stanys he prepared and published the first textbook on “Biotechnology of agricultural plants” in Lithuanian; in 2010 together with colleagues produced the first dictionary of agricultural plant breeding and seed production (in three languages). He also published monographs “Professor Jonas Bulavas” (together with

J. Mockaitis, 2003), “Professor Kostas Bėčius – about himself and plant breeding in Lithuania” (together with J. Mockaitis, 2011), educational books “The use of genetically modified organisms and the environment”, “Organic plant breeding and seed production” (2008), popular science books “Future crop yield – what will it be like?” (1975), “The most suitable plant varieties and peculiarities of their cultivation” (1995), “Soy” (together with E. Venskutonienė, 2000), as well as co-authored methodology books for students: “Advice on methods for training practice on genetics and plant breeding” (1999), “Laboratory work on genetics” (2001), “Computer programmes for genetic analysis, methodology advice” (2001), “Tasks of genetics, training tool” (2002), “Development of oilseed rape double haploids by isolated microspore culture method, methodological advice” (2001), “Requirements of organic seed production” (2005). A. Sliesaravičius authored and co-authored a total of 374 articles of which 274 are scientific and 100 popular articles.

Prof. Algirdas Sliesaravičius is a scientist of great insight and creativity. He is a goal-oriented scholar with a solid, argument-based opinion, highly erudite, open to scientific innovations. He is a researcher and promoter of biology and agronomy sciences, author and compiler of textbooks and other publications. The sole aim of prof. A. Sliesaravičiaus activities is advancement of Lithuania’s science.

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