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Obituary

Günter Martin Hoffmann

The retired professor of plant pathology at the Technical University of Munich, Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h.c. Günter Martin Hoffmann, passed away after a short illness on 6 March 2013 in the age of 89.

Günter Martin Hoffmann was born in Hartmannsdorf (district Lauban, Silesia) where he enjoyed his youth and primary education. He studied agricultural sciences at the Martin-Luther-University in Halle where he received his PhD in 1953. His teacher and mentor was the renowned plant pathologist and virologist Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Maximilian Klinkowski. He was promoted by the professors Theodor Roemer, Walter Hoffmann and Karl Schmalfuß. Working for the Academy of Agricultural Sciences of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), he received his habilitation with studies on actinomycetes (*Streptomyces* sp.) on potato. He left the GDR with his family due to the intolerable political circumstances and found employment as a research associate at the Institute of Plant Diseases and Protection of the former Technical University of Hannover. There he concluded tenureship and was appointed academic councillor and extraordinary professor of plant pathology and microbiology in 1963. This period was characterized by experimental work on fungal diseases of major horticultural crops and decontamination of soils infested with root pathogenic and vascular wilt fungi.

In 1972, he was appointed full professor at the newly founded Institute of Phytopathology of the former Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture of the Technical University of Munich-Weihenstephan.

Günter Martin Hoffmann has acquired a reputation as a highly skilled and highly recognized academic teacher who managed to incorporate his scientific discipline into the general and specific aspects of modern agriculture. His consistent conviction of the inseparability of teaching and applied phytopathology is illustrated in the topic of his textbooks and publications in national and international scientific journals. Their breadth, including nearly 200 peer-reviewed publications and the editorship of two established textbooks ("Lehrbuch der Phytomedizin", "Parasitäre Krankheiten und Schädlinge an landwirtschaftlichen Nutzpflanzen"), illustrate his intense and fruitful research and teaching. He acted as the editor-in-chief of the "Zeitschrift für Pflanzenkrankheiten und Pflanzenschutz", currently "Journal of Plant Diseases and Protection" for more than 12 years.

According to his scientific view, the key to solutions to problems concerning parasitic diseases lies in their biology, physiological abilities, in behaviour in the field, and finally in their population dynamics as affected by cultivation and environment. Especially epidemiological analyses gained weight from which, after a short time, the tessellated development of the basic blocks of a workable IPM system could be derived.

He has lived the idea of IPM long before before concepts of optimized integration of crop protection measures had been included in laws and regulations. For this purpose, he had developed ground-breaking IPM models which have up to the present time a high priority in the search for ways to global food security both on a national and international scale.

He managed it timely to tread completely different and new paths in the development of IPM models by world-wide implementing control thresholds and prognosis models. Unlike the stalwarts of his time, he went his own way to solve problems, to the goal of a truthful, scientifically reproducible, purposeful and optimized control of plant infection and damage. He solved the problem by the pragmatic analysis of multifaceted, multiannual and trans-regional case studies. These studies characterized the behavioural patterns of the epidemics and damage dynamics as well as derived functional control thresholds from empirical data.

The reproducibility of his control concepts on a worldwide scale confirmed his scientific approach. With this unique approach, he has opened new paths of knowledge transfer from science to the farm in order to meet challenges of today and tomorrow.

One example is the prognosis of downy mildew of hop (*Pseudoperonospora humuli*). The old-fashioned intensive pesticide spraying was reduced to a minimum by an exactly scheduled pathogen prognosis. Günter Martin Hoffmann and his co-workers developed IPM decision models for wheat and barley – known as Bavarian wheat and barley model – and established the required control threshold concept and diagnostic systems. Another milestone was reached with the development of the IPS sugarbeet model which now delineates control of beet diseases in Europe and North America.

Throughout his scientific work, he cooperated with the Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry and with the plant protection industry. Especially his cooperation with the Bavarian State Ministry, the Bavarian State Research Centre for Agriculture and the regional bureaus of agriculture bore fruit with the implementation of scientific knowledge in the interest of society.

He was awarded the German Order of Merit and the Medal of the Bavarian State for special merits for his contribution to integrated pest management. He was honoured with an honorary doctorate by the Christian-Albrechts University of Kiel in 1996. In 2004, he was awarded the Anton de Bary medal of the German Society of Plant Diseases and Plant Health for his commitment to the biology and epidemiology of plant pathogenic fungi with a special focus on integrated pest management. Besides his work as a researcher and teacher, he was active in numerous scientific panels.

We have lost in Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Günter Martin Hoffmann a scientist whose main goal has always been to help farmers in their decisions for an optimal economic and resource-conserving crop management. The most precious legacy of Günter Martin Hoffman is his humanistic and professional attitude with which he reached all our hearts.

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