

CHRONICLE

Professor Antanas Stancevičius – a renowned scientist and a public figure of Lithuania



Antanas Stancevičius – professor, doctor of sciences of the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture (currently – university) can be introduced as Lithuania’s eminent scientist – agronomist and botanist, initiator of national geobotanical research, explorer of cropping systems and crop rotations, a public figure, longevous head of the Crop and Soil Management Department, educator of agricultural specialists and research workers, author of prolific scientific heritage, and patriot of the country.

He was born 90 years ago on January 8, 1920 in Lomia village of the Tauragė county, Bataikiai province. During 1938–1942 he completed a full course at the Academy of Agriculture’s (in Dotnuva) Department of Agronomy. In 1943 he was awarded a diploma in agronomy for his diploma paper “Weeds in winter cereals in the autumn” in which he summarised the experimental results obtained during 1942–1943 while working at the Dotnuva Plant Protection Station’s Department of Weeds as an assistant.

During 1943–1944 he was employed as an agronomist in the Tobacco Growing Centre, from 1944 to 1946 on the Alytaus county collective farm and later became director of this farm.

For 57 years (1947–2004) he had been teaching at the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture beginning from an assistant and finishing as a professor, from 2004 to his death – as a professor emeritus. For 25 years (1956–1957, 1962–1968, 1974–1992) he was in charge of the Department of Soil and Crop Management. In 1958 he defended a dissertation for a candidate of agricultural science degree (doctor’s degree) entitled “Vegetation of crops, its significance for agronomical soil characteristic and weed control management in Lithuanian SSR”. During 1989–1993 he was chairperson of the

board of the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture; during 1991–1996 and from 2003 to death – member of the Lithuanian Science Board, from 2001 to death – member of Agricultural Science Board at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius was very actively involved in voluntary activities. During 1991–2000 he chaired the restored Chamber of Agriculture, from 2000 acted as honorary chairperson. He was an editorial board member of the journals “Mūsų gamta” (“Our nature”) (1977–1990), “Žemės ūkis” (“Agriculture”) (1991–2000), chairperson of the board of the Lithuanian Herbologists’ Society (1999–2007), board member of the Lithuanian Union of Agronomists, member of the Lithuanian Society of Botanists, honorary member of the public organisation “Sambūris Patirtis” (“Assembly Experience”) and virtual member of European Weed Research Society (EWRS), the International Soil Tillage Research Organisation (ISTRO), International Information Academy.

For his arduous work and active public engagements he earned especially many honours and awards of which the most important are: Lithuania’s merited agronomist (1965), Republican Science Prize for the work “Flora of Lithuanian SSR” volumes I–III (1966, with co-authors), *Doctor honoris causa* of the Lithuanian Academy of Agriculture (1994), professor emeritus (2004). He was awarded the 5th Class Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas (1998), and a title “Village Ray of Light of Lithuania” (2005).

Professor Antanas Stancevičius passed away on the 24th of August, 2007 at the age of 87. He is buried in Kaunas Karmėlava cemetery.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius was the first in Lithuania to have studied field weeds from the phytocenological point of view and developed the first classification of crop associations. This scientific activity of his was characterised by novel ideas and original scientific hypothesis.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius investigated various cropping systems, agrotechnical, land reclamation and organisational measures of land use designed to maintain soil fertility and increase the yield. One of the systems was fallow cropping system whose primary task is to control weeds. Thus, by suggesting a new, more economical method for layer – tillage of fallows intended to control weeds, especially perennials, or by engagement in research on

herbology, assistant professor Antanas Stancevičius did not distance himself from his favourite phytocology.

The third research field of professor Antanas Stancevičius was a rational farm crop rotations system which he described as a combination of adjusted crop rotations in one farm.

Professor's considerable creative activity is testified by his participation in scientific conferences. During a period of 47 years, he, alone or with his disciples published 117 scientific reports and articles, among them 35 outside Lithuania in Finland, Germany and Great Britain. Due to his many years' continual participation in the scientific events of botanists, herbologists, and agricultural specialists, the professor was familiar to many colleagues in the former soviet republics.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius prepared and published a total of 1179 printings: 38 books and brochures, 807 articles and 334 short communications, statements and addresses. Most of his books are devoted to soil and crop management and crop production technologies – 13, soil and crop management and its studies – 8, herbology and its studies – 5. As a sole author and in co-operation with other professors he prepared and published 11 botanical publications (8 floristic, 2 phytocological and 1 geobotanical), 2 publications on agricultural policy 1 on the history of university education.

The 807 articles published by the professor can be divided according to purpose: scientific – 185, science dissemination – 318 (including encyclopaedic – 111), issues of university studies – 94, and social issues – 210 (including agricultural policy – 202). Thus, as a sole author, professor Antanas Stancevičius wrote most of his articles on social issues. Most of his co-authors were his doctoral students or co-workers.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius scientific interests are ostensibly illustrated by the number of articles published in the two fields of agronomy science: soil and crop management – 110, herbology – 55, and floristics – 20. It should be noted that this nice harmony and complementation between the herbology and floristics research was also observed in his other research on agronomy and botany. A period of 1971–1990 was the most productive for the professor when he used to publish on average 6 scientific articles per year.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius was highly concerned about Lithuania's agriculture. He responded sensitively not only to the occurring problematic situations but also did not evade annual, mundane agricultural producers' concerns about higher crop yield, appropriate use of natural grasslands. He immediately published his own results and those obtained by the researchers of the Soil and Crop Management Department in popular press.

Professor Antanas Stancevičius educated 25 doctors of sciences. The total number of his post graduate students (doctoral students) employees who

prepared dissertations during 1965–1975 increased to 15 but not all of them completed them.

It was estimated that during 1958–2004 Antanas Stancevičius works were cited 284 times. Most of the citations (120) refer to soil and crop management works. The works on floristics and herbology were cited at a very similar rate (78 and 80 times).

Antanas Stancevičius active civil position is reflected in his public outgivings, declarations and addresses on the issues relevant for Lithuania at that period. They make up a total of 334. According to thematics or purpose they can be divided as follows: agricultural policy – 248, science development – 42, rural development – 31, development of studies – 13.

Antanas Stancevičius joyfully welcomed Lithuania's revival, Sąjūdis movement and restoration of Independence. During 1986–1990, his public/social activity started to increase and his civil position showed up. This activity of his reached its peak during 1996–2000, when he was chairperson of the Chamber of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania.

Most of the discussions were focused on agricultural reform and general agricultural development in Lithuania after restoration of Independence, law on citizens' ownership rights to the survived real estate, agricultural cooperation, usage of rural support funds, use of non-productive and low productivity soils, customs duty on ammonium nitrate fertilizer, prospects for Lithuania's sugar and flax industries, admission to the European Union and NATO.

The professor sensitively reacted to agricultural development problems of lesser importance with his numerous outgivings. In the last ones he expressed his disapproval of land monopolization and approval of family farm and cooperation. The professor's thinking was original, not always and not to everyone acceptable but no-one dared accuse him of populism. I think that the journalists of the paper "Lietuvos rytas" ("Lithuania's morning") were right saying that none of the governments liked him.

It cannot be said that professor Antanas Stancevičius scientific, public and publicistic activities ended abruptly. Together with others and alone he paid his tributes to those who exited to eternity – professors Vytautas Kubilius, Povilas Čibiras, Regina Žulienė. He wrote articles to monographs about professors Kazys Brundza and Jadvyga Monstvilaitė. I am grateful to him for his very comprehensive articles for the monographs that I wrote about professors Vincas Vilkaitis, Juozas Tonkūnas, Petras Vasinauskas and Bronius Baginskas.

Maybe this is why his contemporaries were not indifferent to him – they commemorated his personality and work done in 353 publications.

In memory of the professor I created this written monument – a monograph "Professor Antanas Stancevičius: about life, people and myself" (in Lithuanian, 2010).

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