

Professor Mirko Vidaković (1924–2002)



Professor Mirko Vidaković, member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, university professor of Dendrology, as well as professor of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Forestry, and honorary doctor of science at the Forestry Faculty in Sopron (Hungary), died on 15 August 2002 at the age of 78. In the course of his highly productive life he pursued world knowledge and accomplishments in his chosen fields, and initiated and headed numerous projects and research programmes until the last day of his life. He also ran four international scientific projects in cooperation with institutions in the USA. As a UN expert, he worked in Pakistan on development projects with the FAO from 1966 to 1969. In 1971, he was co-director of the FAO Training Centre for Forest Tree Improvement in Sopron, Hungary, and visited Vietnam on three occasions in the capacity of FAO expert from 1979 to 1983. He was editor of the journal *Annales forestales*, published by the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts, and head of the Trsteno Arboretum (Dubrovnik). The success and significance of his work is shown by numerous awards for his achievements in the field of natural sciences. For his outstanding achievements in IUFRO, the Professor Mirko Vidaković was given special recognition in 1990. He published more than 150 scientific and technical papers, wrote textbooks in Genetics and Forest Tree Breeding, as well as the book "Conifers – Morphology and Variation"

which was published in Croatian and English. He devoted a large portion of his working life to educating experts, teachers and researchers.

Professor Vidaković began his research activity with comparative investigations into the taxon of black pine. His work is a highly valuable scientific contribution to the study of black pine in its entire distribution area. Professor Vidaković also studied the application of radioactive radiation in his investigations of impacts of radiation on seed germinability and plant growth in several conifer species. The results of within-species hybridisation of pines in pollination with pollen exposed to radiation are of particular interest. With his associates in Pakistan, Professor Vidaković studied the inheritance of height and diameter increment and stem straightness in the species *Dalbergia sissoo*. Investigation in the genera *Larix* and *Picea* showed that some combinations of interspecific hybridisation yield progeny of a more vigorous growth. Hybrid families formed from crossbreeding of European and Japanese larch have a more vigorous growth than the control crosses, with the trend continuing at an older age. In his work, Professor Vidaković found that there were spontaneous hybrids between *Pinus nigra* and *Pinus heldreichii* var. *leucodermis*, and between *Pinus brutia* and *Pinus halepensis*. Professor Vidaković dealt with the problem of incompatibility in interspecific hybridisation of *Pinus nigra* and *Pinus sylvestris*. The practical result of his long-lasting research is the production of hybrids between these two pine species characterised by a better growth compared to pure black pine. This implies the possibility of successful growth of these hybrids or their retro hybrids in karst areas. In the field of seed production, Professor Vidaković dealt with the problems of vegetative propagation and establishment of clonal seed orchards of forest tree species. The success and importance of his work is testified to by a number of awards. In 1997, he was awarded the Republican Award "Ruđer Bošković" for his achievements in the field of natural sciences.

The death of Professor Mirko Vidaković represents the loss of an exceptional scientist – a loss for his students and co-operators, with whom he actively worked on new methods for a more fruitful transfer of scientific achievements into forestry practice until his last day.

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