

# Day of the Plant Protection Specialist - A celebration with great spirit and high hopes

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**Plant Protection Specialist Day – 16 January, brought together the professional elite at the “Princess” Hotel in Sofia. The event reconfirmed what has been happening in the sector: things have begun to move in the right direction. The administration, freed from fears and pressure, has stopped waging war against business and has begun to assist it in operating in a predictable and transparent market environment, demonstrating empathy and solidarity. And this means: new energy in the system, new opportunities for the modernization of plant protection at national level.**

This year’s ninth edition of the Plant Protection Specialist Day gathered in the ceremonial hall of the elite “Princess” Hotel in Sofia representatives of different generations of administrators, businesspeople, scientists and producers. Smiling faces, laughter, uplifted spirits, high morale, a pleasant atmosphere, people freed from tension and fears. This positive setting is a convincing

indication that things in the sector have started to move in the right direction. The last two celebrations took place under the sign of many dependencies and constraints. The two dwarfs, as the Minister of Agriculture Miroslav Naydenov and the Executive Director of the BFSA Yordan Voynov were called because of their extremely short stature, inflicted severe damage on the plant protection administration. The NCRP was crushed as an independent service and, with the status of a low-level small sector, was incorporated into the mega-structure of the BFSA, entirely controlled by the veterinary special forces. This administration too was burdened with complexes of inferiority and lack of professionalism, was set against business through punitive actions, often inconsistent with statutory provisions, manipulated and used for political assignments and corruption schemes. At the Plant Protection Specialist Day – 16 January 2012, Dr. Naydenov appeared most unexpectedly in casual wear – with an anorak, a checked flannel shirt, jeans and trainers. He was in a hurry to take personal part in the extinguishing of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak and nevertheless stopped by here. With his innate hypocrisy and posing he loudly announced that the fears of the plant protection specialists were unfounded. They were becoming part of the BFSA and, as full members of this super-powerful agency, their salaries would very soon be aligned with the salaries of the veterinarians. A word spoken is like a stone thrown! Only, the stone remained forgotten in the “Princess” Hotel. No one ever again mentioned this alignment... At the next celebration – 16 January 2013, the then Executive Director of the BFSA Dr. Yordan Voynov was late by almost two hours for the beginning of the event. And when he finally “showed up”, out of breath from running up the stairs, he addressed the plant protection community, which had lost its patience, with the strange for the occasion form of address “dear environmentalists”. It seems he did not know where he was... After he had somewhat recovered, instead of apologizing for the blunder, his bossy aggression and arrogance surfaced. With much fervour and gesticulation he began scolding those present that until he saw the new Plant Protection Act in the light of day, no one should even dare to dream of a salary increase. And yet another sad fact. At that time the doctor headed the “P.P.” sector due to the lack of a manager with appropriate professional qualifications??? The two dwarfs left safe and sound, and new people came into the management of the BFSA. The host of this year’s Plant Protection Specialist Day – 16 January 2014, Plamen Lazarov, Deputy Executive Director of the BFSA and Head of the “P.P.” sector, managed in only a few months to make a 180-degree turn and to bring into synchrony the individual mechanisms of the administrative machine. Plamen Lazarov buried the hatchet, reset the rules according to which the administration is the state control authority and, in this capacity, began to perform its duties and responsibilities towards business, the market and plant protection practices in the field accurately, clearly and competently. He liberalized the registration regime and proved that this instrument had for years served as a means of pressure and speculation. He restored the self-confidence of the staff of the “P.P.” sector. Plamen Lazarov, as it used to be said in a bygone time – justified the trust! Never mind that the Minister of Agriculture and Food Prof. Dimitar Grekov pondered for quite a long time whether to appoint him, although he knew very well that this man had the ideas, energy and capabilities to transform the rusty mechanisms of the system. Thank God, prudence prevailed! Whatever we may say, from whichever side we approach and turn it, in the end we arrive at professionalism and leadership. Plamen Lazarov is an undisputed leader with a highly professional expert capacity. These qualities are acknowledged

both by his critics and by those who respect his managerial talent, foresight and creative drive. He has been successful in all endeavours he has undertaken. A leader of the new generation. His key competences command respect! His team respects him, likes him and follows him, and his superiors take into account what he says and does.

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**The Plant Protection Specialist Day – 16 January 2014, is a starting point for change in a positive direction. Plamen Lazarov has positioned the new vision of the plant protection administration as part of the national project for the intensification of agricultural production. According to him, this administration is fully prepared to work successfully in a dynamic environment with many challenges. It has sufficient motivation, focus and professional capacity! (P.P.)**