

# Plant protection in Bulgaria turned 121 years old

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*On 16 January, in keeping with tradition, plant protection specialists from across the country celebrated their professional holiday. The modest ceremony of one of the key guilds in Bulgarian agriculture took place in the representative hall of the Agricultural University in Plovdiv.*

Plant protection in Bulgaria marked 121 years since its establishment back in 1896 by Decree of Prince Ferdinand. Much water has passed under the bridge since then... Historical memory records many peaks and downturns. Today the plant protection community in Bulgaria faces the fundamental question: will this glorious and necessary profession be able to survive in today's complex environment? We have in mind its unenviable administrative status as a small sector within the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency. Its assigned secondary role leaves an imprint on all of its organizational activities as the responsible institution for the phytosanitary status of crop

production in the country! In other words: nothing depends on it! In this regard, one strange fact: for two consecutive years the administration has been only a protocol guest at this celebration and has not participated in its organization!

The liquidation of the National Plant Protection Service was yet another example of managerial and political short-sightedness and lack of foresight. This example proved that the transition to modernity is a huge, but highly contradictory step forward. In the air of the university hall, which brought together the elite of plant protection in our country, there settled the feeling that something dramatic had to happen, something that would take developments to another qualitative level, give new dynamics to events, and put an end to marginalization and neglect. Because the administrative crisis continues to deepen and is acquiring a chronic character. The paradox is evident. Everyone unanimously desires a modern national plant protection system. At the same time, this national plant protection system has a physically insufficient, poorly paid, institutionally underestimated administration and management. With many guardians, fortune-tellers and mentors over its head. The result is deplorable – deficits and breaches in the control of the market and the use of PPPs, a registration regime defined on a lottery principle, an open door for illegal imports of pesticides...

### **The BARZ Award**

Let us stop here. The topic is broad and explosive. On a holiday, a dose of optimism is by no means to be underestimated. A reason for a breath of fresh air was that the BARZ award for “Contribution to Applied Agricultural Science for 2016” was presented to four scientists and lecturers whose lives have been devoted to plant protection. These are Prof. D.Sc. Angel Kharizanov, entomologist, long-standing lecturer at the Faculty of Plant Protection and Ecology of the Agricultural University in Plovdiv and managing editor of the journal “Plant Protection”, Prof. Dr. Tonio Tonev, herbologist, Head of the Department of Agriculture and Herbology at the Agricultural University in Plovdiv, Prof. Dr. Svetoslav Bobev, phytopathologist, lecturer at the Faculty of Plant Protection and Ecology of the Agricultural University in Plovdiv, and Prof. Dr. Hristo Bozukov, phytopathologist at the Tobacco and Tobacco Products Institute in the village of Markovo, Plovdiv region.