

# 126 years – care for plants

Автор(и): Растителна защита  
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*Today, in keeping with tradition, 126 years of plant protection activity in Bulgaria are being marked – a history filled with challenges and difficulties, whose main mission remains the preservation of the diversity of plant species. Plant protection is a key factor for the development of modern and sustainable agriculture, competitive in the dynamic environment of continuous social and economic changes. Happy professional holiday to all devoted to the cause of plant protection!*

## **16 January – Plant Protection Officer's Day**

In the distant year 1884, phylloxera – the “vine plague” – the most severe calamity ever to befall our viticulture, appeared in Bulgaria. Within a few years, a large part of the vineyards in the regions of Vidin, Lom, Vratsa and

others were destroyed. The path of phylloxera from west to east and from there south across the Balkan Range was marked with strips of red cloth raised high above the diseased vineyard. This “front” swept across the whole of Bulgaria and from 1,150,000 decares of vineyards in 1897, the area decreased to 434,000 decares in 1919. The appearance of phylloxera necessitated the adoption of urgent measures: the enactment of the “Law on Measures Against Phylloxera Infestation (Vine Plague) and the Restoration of Vineyards Devastated by It” by Decree of Tsar Ferdinand of 16 January 1896. It is precisely with this law that the official beginning was laid of the fight against plant pests and of plant protection activities in our country. Thus 16 January was adopted as the professional holiday of the plant protection officer in our country.

### **History of Plant Protection Activities in Bulgaria**

A series of laws followed, which legally regulate plant protection activities in the country:

- Law on the Improvement of Agricultural Production and the Protection of Farmland – 1925, which regulates quarantine measures for the import of agricultural products;
- In 1930 the first independent law governing the protection of plants from diseases and pests was adopted, and by Decree No. 21 of Tsar Boris III of 10.04.1933 the International Convention for the Protection of Plants of Rome 1929 was ratified.

Over the years, there was no centralized structure to carry out all plant protection activities in the country. In accordance with the requirements laid down in the International Plant Protection Convention of Rome 1951, in 1991 the Grand National Assembly ratified the International Convention and by this act enabled the establishment of a service compliant with international standards.

By Decree No. 131 of 15 July 1992 of the Council of Ministers and the subsequent Order of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry of 14 October of the same year, the National Plant Protection Service (NPPS) was established.

The adoption of the Plant Protection Act of 1997 and the supplementary one of 2001 affirmed and institutionalized the Service as the sole official state authority for exercising control and regulatory functions in the field of plant protection. As an external phytosanitary border of the EU, the NPPS has been making efforts to harmonize legislation with that of the Community in areas such as biological testing and authorization of plant protection products, organic farming, phytosanitary control, the central laboratory for pesticide control, and regional laboratories for pest control.

## Plant Protection – a Preferred Academic Discipline

Plant Protection Officer's Day was solemnly celebrated for the first time on 16 January 2006 in the Aula of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv, on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of the issuance of the first Bulgarian legislative act in the field of plant protection. Over the years, the higher education institution has proved that it is the best place for teaching and developing the speciality “Plant Protection”.

The Agricultural University in Plovdiv and the company “SGS Bulgaria” join efforts in testing plant protection products

On 20 December 2021, at a formal ceremony, awards were presented to the universities that rank first by professional fields according to the Bulgarian University Ranking System. The event, known as the “Academic Oscars”, brought together the academic elite and representatives of the business community. The Agricultural University is once again the national leader in the fields “Crop Science” and “Plant Protection”.



*Mila Valkova, Senior Manager “Recruitment and Employer Brand” at “Kaufland – Bulgaria”, presented an Academic Oscar to the Rector of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv, Prof. Dr. Hristina Yancheva. Photo: Agricultural University*