

Book reviews

Research on viruses of legume crops and the International Working Group on Legume Viruses: historical facts and personal reminiscences. By L. Bos, 1996. 151 pp. Published by IWGLV, c/o ICARDA, P.O. Box 5466, Aleppo, Syria

D.J. Hagendorn and L. Quantz were in 1961 the founders of the International Working Group on Legume Viruses (IWGLV) with the objective to promote the study of virus diseases of legume crops and their control by improving international collaboration among scientists, actively involved in their study. In nine chapters the author gives indeed a lot of interesting historical facts and his personal reminiscences. His personal involvement is clearly demonstrated in one of his statements, e.g., on page 70 'Many years ago, at my suggestion and from my collection, cowpea mosaic comovirus and alfalfa mosaic alfamovirus became objects of study in highly productive molecular biology programmes at Universities in Wageningen (Van Kammen and coworkers) and Leiden (Jaspars, Van Vloten-Doting, Bol and coworkers)'. (Not Leyden, this is one of the very few typographical errors that occur in the book).

Chapter 5, *Group achievements and corollaries*, and Chapter 6, *Aspects not specifically dealt with by the group*, comprise about half of the book.

Chapter 5 describes the legume viruses and in particular potyviruses and luteoviruses. For those looking for an excellent historical account, it is the chapter to read. This history teaches the present generation how concepts, techniques and facilities, currently taken for granted, have evolved gradually through a process of trial and error. History also shows how progress in science usually consists of numerous small human contributions linked together in various ways. This linkage is where the working group has played a prominent role and should continue to do so.

Chapter 6 describes the viruses in clovers, viruses of leguminous trees and shrubs, and the genetic improvement of legume crops. The chapter ends with legume viruses in the tropics and the valuable personal experience of the author is given. For those starting to work in international agricultural research centers a must to read because of the clear analysis of the problems and the valuable advice.

Finally in chapter 8, *Evaluation of achievements and perspectives for the future*, the author concludes that the group should go back to its very roots, that is, the study of natural complexity in the farmers' fields as a basis for the development of strategies of control. This will involve institutions, governments, international organizations and individual researchers and they should attempt to link and integrate the reductionist laboratory environment with the extremely complex crop in the open. Present privatized contract research commands rapid successes. In this context, the build-up of long-term expertise and documentation does not pay for institutions and for individual researchers. Hence, so much reluctance by both to concentrate on the more arduous ecological approaches. It explains the present re-emerging tendency to indulge in short-term studies and to forget about the complexity in life.

Although some references of 1995 are given most of the literature ends at 1993. Altogether I recommend it to all plant pathologists both mature and starting researchers, if they are interested in viruses.

The book can be obtained from Dr K. Makkouk, ICARDA, P.O. Box 5466, Aleppo, Syria for 5 US \$ plus mail charges: 2 US \$ for surface mail and 4 US \$ for air mail.

B.J.M. Verduin
Wageningen