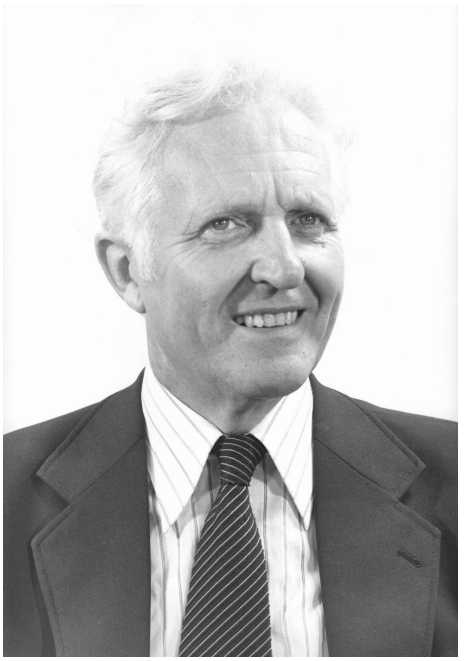
PROFESSOR JAN PIETER HENDRIK VAN DER WANT – A COMMEMORATION

On Tuesday, 23 of January 2007, at Wageningen passed away Prof. Dr. Eng. Jan Pieter Hendrik van der Want. For long years he had been head of the Laboratory of Virology at the Wageningen Agricultural University. He was an excellent scientist and manager in the scientific field. He was a man of merit for the European and world virology, being also a friend to all the people, including Polish people as well.

He was born in Amsterdam on 22 of February 1921. In his young years he connected his life with Wageningen Agricultural University. He graduated from the University, specialising in tropical plants. The whole professional career of Dr. van der Want was connected with the Laboratory of Virology of the University. For 25 years (1962–1986) he had lead the work of this Laboratory accounting for its high position in the scientific world. His own research work Dr. J.P.H. van der Want started with the research on tomato spotted wilt virus, that is nowadays an especially interesting object. He worked on characterising several plant viruses, particularly on searching for their characters that might be used for taxonomic purposes. Taxonomy of viruses was his main interest. Professor J.P.H. van der Want belonged to a group of virologists who established International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV), and he had been an active member of Plant Virus Subcommittee. In 1978 he was the main organiser of the 4th International Congress of Virology in Hague. The Congress was of particular importance to the agreement of the scientists working on plant viruses and the viruses of other living organisms, including human and animal viruses. Professor van der Want himself accounted also to the research on baculoviruses – parasites of animals accompanying man. The aim of the research was to use baculoviruses for biocontrol of pet parasites.



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Professor van der Want retired in 1986, but his scientific activity had not ceased. To the last years of his life he continued to publish new scientific papers. He travelled also to South American and African countries serving with his help and with his great experience for solving the problems caused by virus diseases of locally grown plants.

Professor J.P.H. van der Want is an author or co-author of several hundred scientific papers as well as a co-author and editor of many books treating on various aspects of virology. He was a tutor and advisor for over 50 Ph.D. students at the Wagenigen Agricultural University. He was there an appreciated lecturer, liked by the students.

In 1975–1977 Professor van der Want was *Rector Magnificus* of the Wageningen Agricultural University and that was when he visited Warsaw Agricultural University in order to negotiate prolongation of an official agreement between both Universities. During the time when Professor van der Want had lead the Laboratory of Virology, many Polish plant virologists visited this Laboratory and some of them studied there to extend their knowledge of plant viruses. Professor van der Want kept close relations with Polish plant virology group in Cracow, in particular with late Professor Aniela Kozłowska (the first Honorary Member of The Polish Phytopathological Society), who created this research group and had lead it for many years. Also during the time of Professors' van der Want leadership in Laboratory of Virology at Wageningen Polish plant virology profited by the Dutch knowledge and experience owing to the three-month-long virology course managed in the autumn of 1967 in Warsaw Agricultural University by Dr. Dirk Noordam. Among several participants of the course there were some persons who later played important role in the development of Polish plant virology – e.g. Prof. Maria Kamińska from the Research Institute of Pomology and Floriculture in Skierniewice, Dr. Anna Twardowicz-Jakusz and Dr. Wanda Hoppe from the Institute of Plant Protection in Poznań, Dr. Anna Kowalska from the Institute for Potato Research (Division at Młochów) and Prof. Selim Kryczyński from the Department of Plant Pathology of the Warsaw Agricultural University.

Beside the scientific interests, Professor van der Want was fond of music. He liked very much to listen to good music and played piano himself. He was survived by his wife, two sons and six grandchildren.

Apart of the professional ground I had the opportunity to meet Professor van der Want when he officially visited Warsaw Agricultural University as *Rector Magnificus* of the Wageningen Agricultural University. During the visit I was a guide to Professor van der Want, staying with him during the official negotiations with *Rector Magnificus* of WAU – Professor Zbigniew Muszyński, guiding our guest on sightseeing in Warsaw and contemplating with him Georges Bizet's "Carmen" spectacle at the Great Theatre in Warsaw. I also accompanied him in the travel to Cracow, where he went to meet Professor Aniela Kozłowska. Especially during the travel I had a chance to learn better the character of Professor van der Want as a man with many interests and broad views, and also as a man who understood and respected the views and customs of other people. There were two outstanding representatives of Wageningen during the official visit in Warsaw, and we were also

two young scientists from Warsaw guiding them. We thought that the Polish reality of those times (middle seventies of 20th century) might have been somewhat exotic and even somewhat difficult to manage with to the Dutch people and therefore we tried almost to nurse the Dutch Professors. When they were leaving back for The Netherlands they confessed to us that we were so careful and so inseparable chaperons that for a moment they took us for the secret agents of political police. That was a good joke to all the four of us.

A Great Man passed away, a Man of merit to his University and to his country, as well as to the European and world virology. We, Polish plant virologists, are particularly indebted to him and we may pay him back only by our grateful memory.

In the name of Polish plant virologists
Prof. Dr. hab. Selim Kryczyński
Professor emeritus of the Warsaw Agricultural University

I am grateful to the friend of ours presently living in The Netherlands, Doc. Dr. hab. Anna Kowalska-Noordam for complete valuable information concerning the life and career of Professor J.P.H. van der Want. The present head of the Laboratory of Virology of the Wageningen Agricultural University, Prof. Dr. Rob W. Goldbach send me the photograph of Professor van der Want attached to this commemoration and also added substantially to my knowledge of Professor, which I am very grateful for.