

José Vallega 1909 - 1978

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José Vallega died April 10, 1978, in Rome, Italy. Professor Vallega was born May 29, 1909 at Genoa, Italy, while his family was waiting to emigrate to South America. He became a citizen of Argentina and attended the University of Buenos Aires where he received the degree of Ingeniero Agrónomo in 1931.

After a couple of years of teaching in the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Buenos Aires and brief service with the Ministry of Agriculture, Vallega joined the Instituto de Fitotecnica de Santa Catalina of the University of La Plata in 1934. There he began research on physiologic races of the rusts of cereals and flax which became the basis of his life's contribution to science. This work stimulated similar research in other countries, especially in South America, as well as interest in breeding cereals for disease resistance. He rose to the rank of Associate Professor on the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of La Plata, and attracted many students and investigators from other countries.

During his tenure at the University of La Plata he received a fellowship from the Argentine Association for the Advancement of Science and spent 1938-1939 in the Department of Plant Pathology of the University of Minnesota, where he studied the cereal rusts with E. C. Stakman and his colleagues. Both Vallega and his American co-workers benefitted from this association.

During 1944-1960 Vallega held a series of important administrative posts in the Ministry of Agriculture in Argentina. He continued his active interest in the genetics

of parasites and the improvement of cereals and promoted and encouraged genetic improvement of fruit and forest trees. During this period his leadership resulted in the establishment of the Instituto de Fitotecnica at Castelar, one of his most important accomplishments.

In 1960 Professor Vallega became Director of the Division of Plant Production and Protection of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, stationed at Rome. There his scientific and organizational talents were particularly effective.

He left the FAO in 1969 and became Agricultural Minister in the Argentine Embassy at Rome. Here he was able to promote agricultural interests common to both Italy and Argentina, and, in his free time continued his studies on diseases of cereals, in collaboration with Dr. Giuseppina Zitelli of the Italian Institute of Genetics for Cereal Research "N. Strampelli".

In 1974 he retired from government service and carried on his research on the interaction of parasites and host plants, first at the Plant Pathology Institute of Bari University and, during the past four years, at the Experimental Institute for Cereal Research at Rome.

Vallega's career was a happy combination of brilliant scientific research, inspired teaching, and international scientific leadership of the highest order. The burdens of administration did not cloud his interest in research nor dull his warm humanity that infused others with his enthusiasm.

He published more than 200 scientific papers. He was a member of scientific societies in several countries, including Venezuela, Colombia, Brasil, Italy, USA, and the USSR. He received many high honors, among which were the Stakman Medal (1960) and The Golden Ear and Diploma of the Tres Arroyos Argentina on the Farmers' Wheat Day in 1973.