

IN MEMORIAM JÓZSEF FARKAS (1933–2014)



Professor József Farkas, Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Professor Emeritus of the Budapest Corvinus University, Faculty of Food Science, passed away on 12th November 2014. He worked until his last minute.

He started his studies at the Faculty of Chemical Engineering, Budapest Technical University in 1951, and after graduation in 1956 he worked for a year in the baking industry, then in 1957 he started to work as research assistant at the Research Institute for Canning, Meat Processing and Refrigeration Industry – since 1959 Central Food Research Institute (CFRI) – and shortly as senior researcher. The Director of the Institute was Dr. Gábor Török, and the Head of the Department of Microbiology was Professor Károly Vas, two personalities playing decisive role in the development of Hungarian food research, and also on his scientific carrier. He became Professor Vas's friend and his devoted follower in the field of food

irradiation. He was the Head of the Department of Microbiology of CFRI between 1968 and 1974, and since 1972, for 14 years he was Scientific Deputy Director of the CFRI. In 1986 he moved to the University of Horticulture and Food Industry (the present Corvinus University of Budapest, CUB) as full university professor, and up to 1996 he served as Head of Department of Refrigeration and Livestock Products. Between 1991 and 1993, he was Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Food Science and between 1993 and 1996, the Scientific Deputy Rector of the University. Since 2003, he was Professor Emeritus of the Faculty, active in teaching until the last week. He was scientific advisor to the CFRI and also to its successor institute.

He obtained his Doctor univ. degree in 1964, his CSc degree in 1968, and DSc degree of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1978. He became Correspondent Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1990, and full Member of the HAS in 2001.

He was the member and/or leading personality of a number of scientific bodies: Chairman of the Complex Committee on Food Science of the HAS, Chairman of the Food Safety Advisory Board of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, Chairman of the Committee of the Hungarian Food Book (Codex Alimentarius Hungaricus), Co-chairman of the Hungarian Scientific Society for Food Industry, elected member of the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Foods of the International Union of Biological Societies (1991–1998). He held offices in and was member of other permanent national and international scientific bodies as well. Professor Farkas participated in the scientific panels of FAO/IAEA/WHO, WHO/ICFMH/IUMS, ICGFI, ICGFI/IFIT, UNDP/IAEA/FAO, and fulfilled duties as FAO/IAEA expert in developing countries. He was also member of the editorial committees of several international journals, like International Journal of Food Microbiology, Journal of Food Engineering. He was the member of

the Editorial Board of *Acta Alimentaria* nearly since its foundation, Editor-in-Chief between 2004 and 2011, and Associate Editor of the Journal since 2011.

Professor József Farkas received a number of scientific awards: 'Sigmond Elek Medal of the Hungarian Society for Food Industry (1974), Kosutány Tamás Medal (1992), Eijkman Award of the Utrecht University (1992), Scientific Award of the VIIIth International Meeting on Radiation Processing (1992), Manninger Medal of the Hungarian Microbiological Society (1993), Ipolyi Arnold Award of the Hungarian Science Funds (2000), Tangl Medal of the Hungarian Nutrition Society (2002), MTESZ (The Federation of Technical and Scientific Societies) Award (2005), and the highest scientific state award in Hungary, the Széchenyi Award was also donated to him in 1999.

He has also been well known in the scientific circles all over the world due to his work on spore forming bacteria – mainly on *Bacillus cereus* –, and also on food preservation technologies, first of all on food irradiation. His results – published in over 400 scientific papers and more than 50 book chapters and studies –, as well as his practical results in the field of food irradiation, prove his efforts were not in vain. He had good relationships with scientists practically from all over the world already from the early times of his carrier, having opportunity to get fellowships to the Bundesforschungsanstalt für Lebensmittelfrischhaltung, Karlsruhe, West-Germany (1959), to the Meat Research Institute, Langford/Bristol, UK (1968), and to the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago (1973). Between 1980 and 1985 he was the director of the FAO/IAEA International Facility for Food Irradiation Technology (IFFIT), Wageningen, The Netherlands, teaching hundreds of young scientists from all over the world, and running scientific projects. The good scientific contact with the IAEA – as a heritage from professor Vas, and further strengthened by József Farkas – resulted in the food irradiation as a widely studied project and practice in Hungary. Many foreigner post-graduate and PhD students, as well as scientists spent considerable time in the CFRI and/or at the CUB, becoming familiar with food irradiation, and thus strengthening the scientific relations among countries, too. A number of young Hungarian scientists and PhD-students were also beneficiaries of his wide international relations, by supporting their efforts to receive fellowships, to study and carry out experiments in well-equipped institutions of other countries, to participate in international projects. He always felt important assisting young scientists to present their results at national and international conferences, workshops, in order to get acquainted with new methods and to get into personal contact with scientists from other institutions at home and abroad. He was open to new solutions, he was up-to-date with the development in the field of food science, particularly in food microbiology, food preservation, and new, emerging preservation technologies.

Food safety in general and particularly in Hungary was also of his great interest, and as scientific advisor to the Hungarian Safety Office and its successor institutes he participated in the elaboration of the Hungarian food safety strategies. As the head of the Subcommittee on Food Safety of the Presidential Committee on Environmental Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for two terms (2008–2014), he also supported the new food-chain safety strategy, and initiated review papers on emerging food safety problems.

With the advent of computer epoch, he quickly learned how to handle the internet, and by surfing he always mined out new information on science and technologies. In the last years his interest turned from the details more and more to the great contexts in science and life, to the interdependence of the seemingly far away scientific fields. It was this holistic approach that he felt important and intended to convey to his colleagues and also to the students in his courses at the University.

“His profession is his passion” – said Dr. Diana Bánáti in her laudation at his 70th birthday, and that was true. He very rarely spoke about personal things, but it was evident from his dropped words how much he liked his family: his wife Piroska – they met while studying at the BME –, their children and grandchildren and the first great-grandson. He was glad that one of his daughters and one of his grandsons followed in his footsteps and chose food science as their profession, he was proud of their progress. Nevertheless, he accepted and supported the ideas of life of his other children and grandchildren, and was proud of them, too. He liked arts, first of all music, and listening to operas and concerts with his wife was his real relaxation.

His untimely sudden death is a great loss for the Hungarian food science – research and education, and also a personal loss for those who knew him. Knowing him for nearly 45 years, it is painful to say ‘Goodbye’ forever. He was my chief when I started to work in the CFRI, and we also kept contact while he was at the University. He supported my scientific carrier as well as that of other young scientists in the Institute and at the University. In the last years we worked again together in the Subcommittee of Food Safety of the HAS, and we supported our last PhD-student together. I had learned a lot from him, science and humanity. Thank you.

J. BECZNER