

**Heybroek, H. M.; Stephan, B. R.; von Weissenberg, K. (eds): Resistance to Diseases and Pests in Forest Trees. Proceeding of the Third International Workshop on the Genetics of Host-Parasite Interactions in Forestry, Wageningen, The Netherlands, 14–21 September 1980. Wageningen: PUDOC 1982. 514 pp. 59 figs. Hard bound Dfl. 140,-.**

Plant diseases and pests are as old as plants themselves, still foresters and agriculturists seem at a loss in finding a lasting solution to the problems and losses they inflict on the economics of raising choice crops.

In 'Resistance to disease and pests in forest trees', experts in this field, reveal their findings and frustrations in the search for disease-free trees – or pests and pathogens that do not kill tree crops.

*The Result of Breeding for Resistance:* Encouraging results from a number of previous efforts have foundered on hidden shocks, even before the news of 'success' had reached most of the research stations. Each time a new genotype was introduced, a new pest or pathogen reared its ugly head, necessitating a new start.

The introduction of this book: 'Breeding for balance', written by the organizing committee of the Workshop, which produced the volume, tells it all, when it stated: – "Breeding for resistance to a parasite is breeding against a flexible adversary: one cannot take it for granted that resistance, once obtained, will remain at the same level."

Indeed, some of the authors of this book seem to be saying that breeding for any measure of resistance to any specific disease or pest of a forest tree is elusive, and that a permanent resistance, an illusion. What is possible, therefore, is a limited resistance for a limited period.

*Hopes:* Considering the factors taken into account when breeding for resistance – genetics, climate, environment and many others – one is left to wonder if Nature herself should not be left alone to nurse her offsprings in her own way. The book is an evaluation of previous efforts made by plant-pathologists in the war against pests and pathogen of forest trees, on one hand, and the new attempts aimed at winning some of the battles, on the other hand. Reading this volume, one is likely to conclude that the war is unwinnable, still it goes on. Perhaps one should agree with those experts who theorized that, a state whereby the tree crop suffers limited losses in economic value without perishing, while a pest or pathogen is not eliminated, is as good as a success!

*Conclusion:* A forester should not despair after reading this book for his contribution to the welfare of the nation, can not always be measured in money and/or yields, but sometimes only in the aesthetic and ameliorating control the forests he creates and protects, offer to the people. Still, one is bound to wonder what new plants and organisms one should expect in the next generation, if plant-breeders and pathologists continue their endless search for disease-free tree-crops.

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