

## **EUROPEAN JOHANNES LINNEBORN PRIZE FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIOENERGY**

### **Laudatio to the 2004 Prize Winner Prof. Spyros Kyritsis, President of the Greek Academy of Agriculture**

Wolfgang Palz

Professor Spyros Kyritsis is one of Europe's outstanding scientists in the field of Agriculture and Biomass for Energy. His achievements are documented in more than 160 scientific publications and books. His laboratory at the Agricultural University of Athens is known for its pioneering work on pyrolysis and fluid-bed gasification. He was the leader of development projects for energy crops such as *Miscanthus*, *Arundo donax* and *Morus sp.* His project on the Greek island of Naxos integrating various forms of clean energies was one of the first of its kind in Europe.

In recognition of his capacity and outstanding work he was entrusted with some of the highest functions for agriculture and energy in his home country. From 1988 until 1992 he was the founding Director General of the national Centre for Renewable Energies in Greece. Later from 1997 until the year 2000, he was the Rector of the Agricultural University in Athens where he used to be a full Professor since 1970. Since the beginning of this year he is the President of the Greek Academy of Agriculture.

Prof. Kyritsis started his career with studies in Greece and France; he holds a Doctor degree of the *Faculté des Sciences* in Paris. More recently he became a "Doctor Honoris causa" of the University of Bucharest.

Prof. Kyritsis always had a broad European interest. Just a few weeks ago he was elected President of a new UNESCO network, the *Euronetres*, aiming at the development of a common base for education and training on Renewable Energies at the European Universities.

Since 25 years already he is a leading partner in the various EU programmes on Renewable Energies, and namely those concerned with biomass and agriculture.

From 1984 onwards he was elected for several periods Member of the Executive Committee of the UN's European Commission on Agriculture which played at that time a pioneering role to establish better contacts with Eastern Europe. From 1991 till 1995 he was elected Chairman of that Commission on Agriculture.

Prof. Kyritsis had various functions in programmes and projects of the FAO in Rome

where he was in particular co-ordinator of a network on Rural Energies.

Maybe his commitment to a broad international co-operation in his fields of interest was best demonstrated when he served as a chairman of the first World Conference on Biomass, with strong participation from the United States, in the year 2000 in Seville, Spain.

To appreciate Spyros Kyritsis, his work and his leadership, one has also to address his exemplary personality. He was born before the war in a poor village in central Greece. His father had to emigrate to the US to find a job and his mother had to raise Spyros and his brother through all the miseries of those days. They were indeed particularly harsh in that village. First came the Italian Army and burned the whole village down, then came the Germans who did not any better. The worst sufferings came with the civil war for which the British were not totally innocent. If that had not been enough, the mountain over the village slipped down and buried half of it for ever.

Spyro's mother was a hero to bring her sons safely across such disastrous times. Today she is 96 years old, in good shape and still able to live independently. Spyros goes every day to look after her.

With his wife Maria he has 2 sons and one daughter who started already their own career. Here also, his family ties are such that he shares everything he got with them.

It follows naturally from his curriculum that Spyros Kyritsis is deeply rooted in Greek culture and tradition. Likewise he is a convinced European; after all, Greece is the mother of Western civilisation. It is also consistent with all his life that he is against ideologies and manipulations. He is against any kind of war to solve international conflicts. Instead, all his life was a commitment and struggle for mutual understanding and co-operation, for a future driven by Bioenergy and all the other Clean and Renewable Energies.

The more than a thousand delegates from all over the World who were gathering this whole week here in Rome for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Biomass Conference are glad to honour today a great Man.

All our heartfelt congratulations, Prof. Spyros Kyritsis!