

an obituary notice



Prof Carlos Alberto SALA PhD

1961-2013

“Adiós a un grande que dejó huella”

Carlos Sala (b.1961) obtained his B. Sc. in Agricultural Science (Ingeniero Agrónomo) and his M.Sc. in Plant Breeding and Genetics at the University of Mar del Plata, Argentina. After six years as a lecturer at the University of Mar del Plata and as researcher in the Argentine National Science and Technology Council (CONICET), in 1992 he moved to Nidera. There he worked as a sunflower breeder for the next six years, before moving on to establish the Biotechnology Department of the same company in Venado Tuerto. His two decades at Nidera were ones of discoveries and success. Major milestones in sunflower included the obtention and identification of a new mutant *Ahas11* gene (base of the CLPlus imidazolinone resistance technology) and the development of its corresponding marker for assisted selection, something which enormously simplified the breeding process required to introgress this trait into elite lines. This was followed by the discovery of a second *Ahas11*

allele which provides resistance to the five families of Ahas inhibitor herbicides (AIR technology). His group also mapped and identified many disease resistance genes. His last work, which involved the identification of one of the genes that control plant height in sunflower, led to him and his group receiving the biennial "Francisco A. Saez" award of the Argentine Society of Genetics during 2013.

The Biotechnology Department he headed focussed on marker-assisted selection for different crops, but sunflowers were his first love and he invested much of his time in this beautiful crop. Carlos developed many lines, hybrids, markers and new traits, but most important of all he conducted a significant research program which simultaneously provided the underpinning for his developments and enriched his vision of applied science. He wrote many articles, book chapters and patent applications, but above all, he shared his knowledge and his vision with those prepared to listen to him.

Tragically, Carlos died on September 30, 2013 at the height of his powers, felled by cancer. During his 52 years he did more than many people during their full life span and he dreamt of projects for the next 50 years. He was tireless, visionary and a very good friend. Those who worked closely with him have suffered an irreparable loss with his passing, and the whole sunflower community is impoverished by his death. His contagious enthusiasm, his all-encompassing knowledge, his brilliant ideas, his intuitive grasp of matters and his acerbic wit will be sorely missed by all those involved in this crop.

*Academician Dragan Škorić
Editor-in-Chief*