UDC: 632(091):633.71(092) DOI: https://doi.org/10.53040/ppap2026.05

VICTOR GHIMPU: THE PIONEER OF TOBACCO PHYTOPATHOLOGY IN ROMANIA

BUTNARU Gallia

University of Life Sciences „King Mihai I" from Timisoara, Romania
Corresponding e-mail: galliab@yahoo.com

Introduction. The early 20th century marked the industrialization and rapid expansion of the global tobacco trade. Global economic importance: due to industrialization, automatic cigarette rolling machines transformed tobacco from an artisanal luxury into a mass-market commodity, and thus governments around the world recognized tobacco as an important source of state revenue through taxes and monopolies.

Materials and Methods. The source materials for this study comprise the scientific papers, academic courses, and conference proceedings on plant protection and tobacco diseases published or presented by Victor Ghimpu between 1928 and 1952. The methodological framework relies on historiographical analysis.

Results and Discussions. Victor Ghimpu's Vision and Observations on Tobacco Diseases. Ghimpu conceptualized tobacco not merely as a commercial commodity, but as a complex biological system that demanded rigorous cytological and genetic profiling. He observed that intensive global monoculture triggered devastating phytopathological epidemics, particularly Mosaic Virus and Blue Mold. Consequently, Ghimpu argued that maintaining economic yield stability was unattainable without elite seed selection and standardized plant immunity protocols.

During the interwar period, Greater Romania, which integrated Bessarabia, experienced a booming agrarian economy in which tobacco cultivation served as a critical financial pillar. However, the distinct ecological variations between these regions led to divergent phytopathological profiles, characterized by different tobacco pathogens and distinct symptomatic manifestations of disease.

In his research, Victor Ghimpu identified and diagnosed local pathogens, selected resistant crop varieties for use in hybridization programs, and advocated for seed breeding and acclimatization. Furthermore, he proposed the implementation of a comprehensive phytosanitary legislation framework.

The agrarian and fiscal management of tobacco fell under the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Monopoly Administration (Regia Autonomă a Monopolurilor/Casa

Autonomă a Monopolurilor, CAM), rendering the sector one of the largest revenue contributors to the Romanian state budget. In Bessarabia, specific microclimates within regions such as Orhei and Hotin, the latter being Ghimpu's birthplace, possessed optimal edaphic and climatic conditions for cultivating high-quality Oriental tobacco varieties. Consequently, tobacco cultivation provided a lucrative alternative to traditional grain farming for thousands of smallholder peasant households.

Ghimpu's core scientific contributions lay in phytopathogen mapping, achieved through the systematic documentation and classification of regional fungal, bacterial, and viral tobacco diseases affecting Romanian fields. He spearheaded selective breeding experiments aimed at adapting disease-resistant Oriental tobacco varieties and local landraces, such as the Ghimpati, Virginia de Baragan, Drăgășani landrace to specific regional agro-ecological environments. Furthermore, his extensive body of research provided the mandatory phytosanitary protocols utilized by state agronomists to safeguard regional agricultural output, effectively laying the foundation for a formalized institutional framework.

Conclusion. The scientific legacy of Victor Ghimpu's research lies in elevating tobacco cultivation from a purely empirical craft into a highly regulated, rigorous agronomic science. Furthermore, his timely phytopathological interventions directly safeguarded state economic assets by preventing catastrophic crop failures across Romania and Bessarabia during a critical macroeconomic era.