

APPS Fellow

Dr Ken Pegg



Ken Pegg has had a very distinguished career as a plant pathologist, working his entire career in Queensland. Ken commenced work as a cadet, in the then Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock in 1956. He continued to work for the same organisation, which has subsequently gone through two name changes, until his retirement in 2001. Over this 45 year period, Ken achieved much for the horticultural industries, for which he worked tirelessly. Since retirement, he has continued to remain actively involved in post-harvest pathology research.

Ken was made a Fellow of the Australasian Plant Pathology Society in 1994. The citation stated: "This nomination is based on the exceptional abilities of Mr K G Pegg to see which plant diseases are limiting production of horticultural crops, to identify appropriate technologies for solving problems, to apply his scientific and inter-personal skills to generate practical solutions, and to persist until the whole job is completed". His exceptional abilities became apparent soon after his appointment as a plant pathologist to Nambour, a centre for sub-tropical fruit production, just north of Brisbane. One of his first achievements was the management, through local quarantines, of the devastating bacterial wilt disease of ginger. Soon after, he implemented successful management strategies for Phytophthora-incited diseases of avocado and pineapple. The repeated pattern to his success was problem recognition and identification of the cause, gaining financial and moral support from industry and government, ceaseless pursuit of practical solutions, helping growers apply the solutions, and publishing the work in scientific and extension journals. Other major successes include Panama Disease of bananas, where Ken led a major international effort into characterising pathogen and host variation for this interaction, funded by ACIAR and INIBAP. These are only some of the diseases Ken has researched and managed.

Mentoring of plant pathology postgraduates has also been another area where Ken has excelled. Plant pathologists whom Ken co-supervised include Drs Vanessa Brake, Suzy Bentley and Natalie Moore, who all researched aspects of Panama Disease of banana. His infectious enthusiasm and expansive knowledge were a great inspiration to all who worked with Ken. He shared long, happy and productive working relationships with many colleagues, including John Alcorn (he and Ken started as cadets at the same time), Rob O'Brien and many others.

It is not surprising that over such a long, productive and distinguished career, Ken has received significant recognition. In 1993, he was presented with the Graham Gregory Medal by Horticulture Australia Limited, for his research achievements over a range of horticultural crops. In 1997 he was given an Award of Honour for service to the Australian Banana Industry, and in 1998 the Pisang Rajah Award by INIBAP, which was international recognition for his research on Panama Disease. When he retired, Ken held the position of Senior Principal Scientist in DPI&F, the highest level of appointment available to a researcher in that organisation. In his "post-retirement", Ken is researching induced natural resistance to anthracnose diseases in tropical fruits, principally avocado.

John Irwin
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