

Obituary

JOSEPH BOONMAN

Joseph Boonman (Jos to his friends), who died tragically on February 22, 2000 at an age of just 59 years, was a pasture scientist who made a significant contribution to pasture science, particularly in East Africa. His work on seed production and selection of the grasses setaria and rhodes grass led to the development of the cultivars Boma and Elmba rhodes grass, and to an understanding of the genetic and physiological attributes relating to seed production in both species.

Joseph was born on March 4, 1940, and first visited Kenya in 1963. He was so impressed by the country that he returned in 1966 to work at Kitale, at the research station where some of the early leaders in tropical pasture science — E.D. Bumpus, A.V. Bogdan and H.W. Dougall — had been conducting research in the years leading up to the country's independence. It was at Kitale that he undertook the research that led to his series of significant papers on setaria and rhodes grass, and to the award of the prestigious doctorate degree by Wageningen Agricultural University in 1973.

In 1979, Joseph returned to his native country, the Netherlands, and took charge of a co-operative seed company. In 1990, he established himself as an independent consultant, working in particular at Volgograd and Moscow, in Russia. In 1999, he was on a mission to Kyrgyzstan, on the Central Asian steppes, and also won a contract to Rumania. During this period, he retained his love of the African tropics, publishing *East Africa's Grasses and Fodders: their Ecology and*

Husbandry in 1993, to be followed in 1997 by the shorter version *Farmers' Success with Tropical Grasses: Crop-Pasture Rotations in Mixed Farming in East Africa*.

I first met Jos in Kitale in 1975, and our two families established a friendship that has persisted over the years. In the 1980s, he had a brief visit to Australia. Jos had broad interests, and his Christmas letters were always fascinating — the trials of buying a loaf of bread in a Russian winter, and, in 1999, the pleasure he and his wife took living and working in Tuscany, and some thoughts on St Francis of Assisi. At the time of his last letter, he was writing a book on the Russian steppe. Joseph was never afraid of arguing against the traditional wisdom, and did not accept the value of legumes in pastures, a concept which has been so strongly promoted in Australia. This is not the place to consider the rights and wrongs of the argument — suffice to say that science advances where viewpoints differ.

Joseph lost his life to an unidentified gunman in Nairobi on February 22, 2000, whilst on a World Bank mission concerned with funding support for the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute. He will be sadly missed by his wife Elisabeth, his daughters Godelijn and Désirée and son Jakob. He will also be missed world-wide by researchers on forages.

Bryan Hacker
March 6, 2000

Apology

A review of the booklet *Farmers' success with tropical grasses: Crop-pasture rotations in mixed farming in East Africa* by Joseph G. Boonman was published in *Tropical Grasslands*, Volume 33. This review was written by Dr Raymond Jones. Dr Boonman indicated that some of his data had been misquoted in this review so Dr Jones has submitted the following apology (Ed.):

In my review of the booklet *Farmers' success with tropical grasses: Crop-pasture rotations in mixed farming in East Africa* by Joseph G. Boonman (*Tropical Grasslands*, 1999, 33, 61–62), I made the following comment: 'The evidence of superiority for the selected rhodes grass material

based on the digestibility data is most suspect. The data were obtained from flowering shoots *at the time when the late-flowering variety was flowering*.' The section in italics implied that the author did not consider differences in sward age at sampling of early-heading (not flowering as I stated) and late-heading varieties. This was not correct as the caption of Table 5.2 on page 31 clearly shows.

I apologise for the hurt this misinterpretation and misquotation have caused.

Raymond J. Jones
CSIRO Tropical Agriculture,
Townsville