



Professor Francisco Pereira Cupertino (*31/10/1938 †11/04/2021)

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Francisco Pereira Cupertino, a son of José Cupertino Costa and Gabriela Maria de Jesus, was born in Vermelho Novo, then a Raul Soares district, in the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais, on October 31, 1938 (Fig. 1). He died on April 11, 2021, in Hospital Brasília, as a result of a cardiopulmonary arrest. He started his first studies in a rural school and, at the age of 12, he was enrolled in the traditional Seminário Menor de Mariana. However, his vocation for agronomy was already ingrained in him. Thus, after completing high school, in 1957, he entered the *Curso Técnico de Agricultura at the Escola Superior de Agricultura de Viçosa* (ESAV-UREMG), an institution that gave rise to the great Universidade Federal de Viçosa. Young, he already revealed his penchant for communication having founded in 1959 a small newspaper reporting the activities of the association of students of the course. He joined the ESAV Agronomy Course in 1960, graduating as an Engenheiro-Agrônomo in December 1963. Soon after, he was hired by the Instituto Biológico de São Paulo where he worked with citrus virology, as part of the historic team led by Dr. Veridiana Victória Rossetti. Shortly after, he transferred to the Instituto Agrônomo de Campinas, joining in 1965, the most important nucleus in the history of the country dedicated to plant virology, under the command of the venerable scientist Dr. Álvaro Santos Costa. In 1968, he married Profa. Naname Chimoda. In 1973, he completed his Doctor's Degree in Plant Pathology at ESALQ/USP. In Campinas, until 1973, he faced the challenge of developing an efficient production system of certified seed potatoes for the country. That year, in a historic decision, the University of Brasília (UnB) tried to add to its roster of professors-researchers; the entire team led by Dr. Álvaro Santos Costa. This effort resulted in the transfer of Prof. Cupertino to Brasília, where he would come to reveal his fervent aptitude for pioneering, by

accepting the challenge of setting up from scratch the first graduate program in plant pathology in the Brazilian Central-West. With him came Profs. Cláudio Lúcio Costa and Elliot Watanabe Kitajima, to initially join Armando Takatsu, Ming-Tien Lin, and José C. Dianese. Shortly thereafter, in 1974, Hasan A. Bolkan and Chaw Shung Huang were added, completing the group of pioneers who started the Master's Degree in Plant Pathology at UnB in 1975 (Fig. 2).

In Brasília, he planned and led the construction, starting with the foundations, of the screenhouses and greenhouses attached to a teaching field laboratory that are still being intensively used. Thus, alongside, Prof. Cláudio Lúcio Costa was physically and technically responsible for the design and assembly of the entire field structure dedicated to plant pathology in the Estação Experimental de Biologia/UnB. An effort they developed alongside exemplary retired civil servants who operated there, notably Gerarcino Breder (now deceased), Misséias Nunes da Mota, and Fábio Rocha Fonseca. Both the teachers and the servants were honored there with a metal plaque attached at the entrance of the station main building. The heroic work of this important pioneer went far

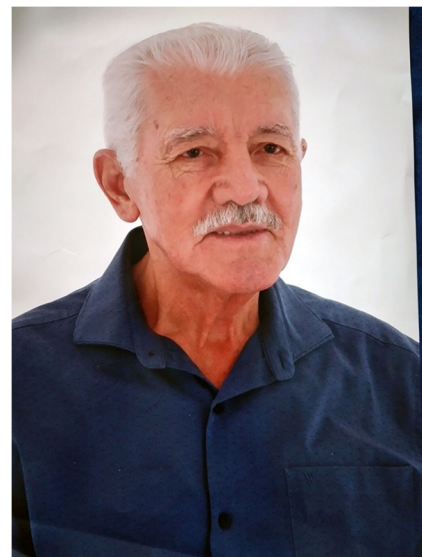


Fig. 1 Prof. Francisco Pereira Cupertino

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Fig. 2 Left to right—Chaw Shung Huang, Cláudio L. Costa, Hasan A. Bolkan, Ming-Tien Lin, Elliott W. Kitajima, José C. Dianese, Armando Takatsu e Francisco P. Cupertino



beyond his normal activities as a professor and graduate advisor. Thus, he was the main responsible for the launch of the journal *Fitopatologia Brasileira* (currently *Tropical Plant Pathology*). Thus, the printing of the first issue of the journal distributed during the 1976 Brazilian Congress of Phytopathology in Recife, was fully funded by Prof. Cupertino.

After intense teaching and research activity, he saw the consolidation of the graduate course and participated actively in academic administration at UnB having headed the Department of Plant Biology and carried out for 2 years (1976–1978), the execution of the UnB/FINEP-Ecology Agreement that applied more than one million US dollars in the assembly of what is today the Department and the victorious Graduate Course in Ecology of UnB. Later, he also headed the Department of Plant Pathology, originated from the ancient Plant Biology. In 1982, he dedicated himself to a sabbatical year of activity at the University of California Davis, in the laboratory of the famous Prof. Raymond G. Grogan. He actively contributed to the implantation of the Doctorate in Plant Pathology at UnB in 1991, shortly before retiring in 1993. The University of Brasilia, in recognition of his important contributions to the institution's progress, granted Prof. Cupertino the title of Professor Emeritus, in March 2006. One of his students, Julio Daniels from Rio Grande do Sul, was the first Master in Plant Pathology graduated from UnB, who later completed his PhD at the University of California-Davis. Like Dr. Daniels, the Embrapa researchers, Sueli Correia Marques de Mello and Paulo Ernesto Meissner, were guided by Prof. Cupertino, as

well as Cleison Medas Duval, an extension expert active in Brasilia.

Professor Cupertino for several decades maintained a farm in the Núcleo Rural de Tabatinga in the Federal District and, as president of its Agricultural Association, he instituted an important yearly extension event, the *Semana do Produtor* lasting 8 days. Then in addition to technical lectures, he promoted intense social activity. Thus, this annual happening was twice attended by the Governor of the Federal District Joaquim Roriz, who was convinced of the need to establish a high school in Tabatinga. Thus, with resources from the *Semana do Produtor*, Cupertino erected four rooms and two bathrooms and the high school was implanted. Today, many of the school's alumni have already graduated from universities, and are working in various areas, to the satisfaction of an active rural community that Cupertino helped to organize. In a final tribute to the land he cultivated, Prof. Cupertino actively participated in a project to recover degraded areas, with training offered on his farm. He recorded a last and emotional speech about the meaning of such an event. Professor Cupertino remains among us through his wife Profa. Naname Chimoda Cupertino, his son Eng. Gustavo Chimoda Cupertino, granddaughter Mariana Queiroz Shimoda Cupertino (Psychologist working in Canada), and 14-year-old grandson Guilherme Queiroz Shimoda Cupertino.

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