LANDTECHNIK 72(4), 2017, 223–224

DOI: 10.15150/lt.2017.3168

LANDTECHNIK
AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING

Spotlight

Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. h.c. Karl-Th. Renius

Photo: J. Frisch, KTBL

75 Land.Technik Conferences – a Success Story

Roughly 150 years ago, one travelled to England to learn about the latest developments in agricultural engineering – and Max Eyth did just that. Around 1905, when many processes had already been mechanised in the USA, the farmer's son Henry Ford had the vision of developing affordable and robust tractors for soil cultivation. In 1917, i. e. exactly 100 years ago, the first specimens of the legendary Fordson F left the assembly line – robust and unmatched in price. For a very long time, they represented ground-breaking engineering.

And Germany? Here, under Privy Councillor Fischer in Berlin, Willi Kloth (1891–1967) had a vision in the late 1920s of advancing German agricultural engineering firms through improved design principles and the transfer of this knowledge (Söhne 1968). After some years of his own research and his habilitation in 1931, the first "Designer Course" took place in 1934 and was recorded in RKTL issue no. 56 of the "Reichskuratorium für Landwirtschaft". Initially the emphasis was on relevant construction fundamentals of general mechanical engineering; however, it included a famous independent thesis on the first load collective worldwide, which was presented by Kloth and Stroppel as from 1932. From 1935–1941, seven further conferences were held before World War II interrupted their continuation.

In 1949, Professor Kloth was appointed as director of the institute for basic research on agricultural engineering (Institut für Landtechnische Grundlagenforschung) at the newly established agricultural research centre (Forschungsanstalt für Landwirtschaft – FAL) in Braunschweig-Völkenrode. Here he revived the conferences in 1951. The first conference already dealt largely with new basic principles of agricultural engineering, for example soil pressure (Söhne), frame design (Bergmann, Brenner), three-point linkage (Skalweit, Hain), hydraulic lift regulation (Seifert), pneumatic conveying systems (Segler) and others. Due to the conferences' high degree of practical relevance, the number of participants quickly increased to more than 300, of whom at least two thirds were from industrial enterprises.

At the same time as the conferences recommenced in 1951, Kloth founded the "Grundlagen der Landtechnik" journal ("basic principles of agricultural engineering", published until 1990), which contained many of the conference contributions of exemplary quality, thanks to the outstanding editorship of Th. Stroppel and later Dr F. Schoedder.

In 1962, the conference format was broadened, and the management was shifted in close cooperation with the FAL to the new VDI „Agricultural Engineering" specialist group (VDI-L), which was established on 13 October 1958, particularly thanks to Professor Segler.

The inclusion of Max-Eyth-Gesellschaft für Agrartechnik (MEG) in the organisation of the conference in 1983 can be seen as a further milestone. Professors H. J. Matthies (VDI), H. Eichhorn (MEG) and A. Stroppel (conference manager) were strong advocates of this inclusion. In his welcoming speech in 1983, Matthies as the chairman went a step further and expressed the idea of amalgamating the two associations as the next major goal, sparking passionate debate. Newly established "VDI-MEG colloquiums" and the 1990s conference in Berlin, which took place for the first time together with the "AgEng Working Party" under the chairmanship of Professor Göhlich, were helpful. As a German delegate, Professor Göhlich, together with Dr F Meier, also advocated the founding of the European Society of Agricultural Engineers (EurAgEng) with effect from 1 January 1992. After considerable effort, the amalgamation of MEG and VDI-AGR to form the new, still existing, VDI-MEG finally took place on 14 October 1994 in Hohenheim Palace under the management of Professor Matthies, who acknowledged the participation of further renowned personalities (Matthies 2006).

Göhlich's vision of "more Europe" was soon taken a step further: in 2001 for the first time under the management of Professor Auernhammer, the conference was held directly before the AGRITECHNICA, in cooperation with the EurAgEng. Thanks to the excellent support from the German Agricultural Society, DLG, the conference took place at Messe Hannover and was a remarkable success. Encouraged by Auernhammer, the German delegation (Professors Auernhammer, Renius, Zaske) put the proposal to the EurAgEng Council on 6 June 2003 in Leuven, Belgium, to merge the conference in the odd years with the AgEng conference directly before the AGRITECHNICA in Hanover.

The proposal was accepted after a lengthy discussion, on condition that the conference language would be English, and implemented as from 2007 under Dr Ehlert's leadership. Visitor numbers increased to new record figures, and, in my opinion, it is no exaggeration to say that the conference is now the most importance one of its kind worldwide.

Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. h.c. Karl-Th. Renius
Chair for Automotive Technology (FTM)
Technical University of Munich

References

Matthies, H. J. et al. (2006): Geschichte der Max-Eyth-Gesellschaft Agrartechnik im VDI. VDI-MEG, Düsseldorf, https://m.vdi.de/fileadmin/vdi_de/redakteur_dateien/meg_dateien/Geschichte_VDI-MEG.pdf, accessed on 27 Sept 2017

Söhne, W. (1968): Professor Willi Kloth zum Gedenken. Grundlagen der Landtechnik 18(1), S. 11–13, http://440ejournals.uni-hohenheim.de/index.php/Grundlagen/article/view/833/748, accessed on 27 Sept 2017